

Flames Burn Bright Among Houston's Future Force
By DeETTA LANE, Houston Correspondent
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Imagine yourself on Walton's Mountain without the farmhouse, but with a puppy name Michell and a dog named Jasper.... Now you have the right picture.

Houston Territory's Future Force (Boys and Girls Group) celebrated its 6th annual camping trip this weekend, compliments of Jack and Andrea Ayers. The Ayers have donated the use of their property each year and have continually given their time and support to ensure its success.

On Saturday morning participants assembled at the community center for gongyo. The Future Forcers simultaneously hosted their own abbreviated gongyo. Once all campers had registered and signed in, vehicles were loaded and the convoy departed for two days of fun and camaraderie.

This trip was special in that, collectively, the Forcers demonstrated their leadership abilities. Within an hour and a half, the campsite was completely set up, including all the tents, the food area, the latrines and both campfires. The Forcers have been doing this for six years, and practice makes perfect. Even the younger Forcers jumped right in as though they, too, had been doing it for a long time. It was as though everyone was in rhythm with each other.

Many improvements had been made to the campsite since last year. There was new lighting throughout the entire area. There was even an altar with offerings. The camp looked incredible, and the feeling was one of serenity. This closeness with nature created an atmosphere of universal celebration with the cosmos.

The Forcers followed their responsibility charts with little or no encouragement and were enthusiastic about doing their share. The Future Forcers demonstrated not only a stand-alone spirit, but also the spirit of unity (one in mind, many in body).

After gongyo on Saturday evening, we all sat around the campfire telling scary stories and roasting marshmallows. Many departed from the area to go stargazing while others stayed back to talk or just sit quietly engrossed in the flames. Finally it was lights out for the Forcers and fireside chats for the adults.

On Sunday morning, following a Future Force tradition, the men's division members cooked pancakes while teams gathered water and finished preparing the rest of breakfast. This morning's gongyo was special because it was lead by a Future Force volunteer, Michael Romero, along with Nia McKerin, a friend of the SGI.

Many of the adult campers were touched by the children's sincerity. It was encouraging to witness the development of the Future Force.

It was now time for fishing. This was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the camping trip. Thanks to the ingenuity of the men's division, we returned to the 'ole school' way of catching fish — that is, with sticks and lines. No fancy poles for us.

Although no fish were caught, everyone pitched in for a final open pit meal of hamburgers and hot dogs.

The Future Force members determined to return next year so that they can learn more about nature, practice with their friends, and have lots of fun.

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