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Kids' creation tells universal tale

Camp participants create a musical that explores myths on the world's origins

By Susan Berger
Special to the Tribune

July 15, 2005

In the garden of creationist theories, Alana Schwarz stumbled across a piece of fruit.

"There was a big strawberry," said the 7-year-old from Highland Park, who credited her inspiration to a lunch. "And each seed became a person. The people were transformed into the world. And the strawberry leaves became trees."

Forty children in 1st through 6th grades at the **Midwest Young Artists fine arts day camp** in Highwood have spent four weeks exploring creation myths, and their work has evolved into the musical "Myths Around the World."

Patricia Black, musical director, said she was inspired after attending a conference that featured Joseph Campbell, author of "The Power of Myth."

"I was so fascinated by the myths," Black said Thursday. "They define us. And I realized that even kindergartners and 1st graders can think in the abstract."

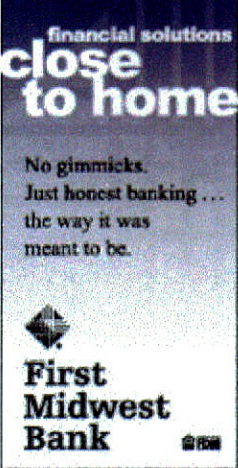
The program focused on four cultures: Australian (Aborigine), Mayan, Chinese and African (Yoruban). The children studied art, dance, literature, music and theater in putting together the show.

The Chinese myth tells of a chaotic world that produced an egg from which the giant Pangu was born. As Pangu slept and grew, the egg broke. Part of the egg became the heavens and part the Earth--and Yin and Yang came to be.

Campers were encouraged to keep a journal and create their own myths. Jacquelyn Sparks, 11, of Highland Park offered her take on China's beginnings.

"When Chinese gods die, their hair becomes the trees and plants and their body becomes mountains," Jacquelyn said. "Their blood becomes the rivers and waterfalls. And their eyes became the sun and moon."

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