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## Summer exchange builds compassion

Children swap spots around the globe

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WATERLOO REGION

Gather 52 children from a dozen countries. Mix them together for a month, throw in fun and games at summer camp, and add Canadian hosts. What do you get?

International understanding and global peace.

This is the hope of Children's International Summer Village. The volunteer-run charity brings children from around the world to Canada, and sends Canadian youths to visit faraway places.

The idea is that exposing children to other cultures helps build a more peaceful world by promoting tolerance and understanding.

The children visiting this region in July come from a dozen countries. They are 11



DAVID BEBEE, RECORD

and 12. Some speak no English.

Yesterday, they held an open house and put on a show for each other and their Canadian hosts, including a sin

While here, the children stay mostly at a summer camp, but also spend two weekends with host families. They  
Indonesia, Spain, Scandinavia, Mexico and Brazil.

Lina Caputo hosted four Spanish children at her St. Agatha home earlier this month. The children, from urban I  
the big outdoors. "It was a wonderful experience," she said. "Everything seemed very green to them. They just  
of them had ever gone fishing before, so we were able to take them fishing. They all caught fish."

Her son is currently in Rome, Italy on an exchange. She's hosting two more boys this weekend, one from Norw  
she's not sure. "It's going to be a surprise," she said.

Denise Shantz is hosting boys from the Philippines, Indonesia and possibly Germany at her Waterloo home this  
host. "In a home, they learn what a family life is like here," she said. "It's been an unbelievable experience for

One of her sons is currently visiting Austria on an exchange. Her other son heads to Sweden at Christmas.

Oystein Lygre, 24, came from Norway to help run the summer camp this month, and to chaperone four Norweg

They were all startled to see the big cars, long trucks and giant highways of southern Ontario. The houses seen  
are often told that everything in North America is bigger than at home. "We really didn't believe it," he said. B

Claire Schwing, 21, came from Ohio to help run the camp, and to chaperone four American children. When she  
Norway on an exchange. "My delegation were really excited to get away from their parents," she said.

Sharmila Menon volunteers to help lead the charity's Waterloo chapter. The organization can be found online at  
through global friendship is the goal, Menon says.

"Kids who start out with not being able to verbally communicate, they end up being the best of friends," she s  
to discriminate."

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