

A Decade under the Green Roofs of Centauri

I remember my first day at Centauri as though it were yesterday. Admittedly, I can't recall exactly what those friendly strangers in yellow hats said to my family as we found our parking spot - it was about 10 years ago, after all. But what I do remember is seeing for the first time the unfamiliar spaces that would soon become my second home; the special place where I would find myself and discover friendships that would run deeper than any that had come before. It was strange, seeing this clump of green-roofed buildings amidst fields of hay and cows, and knowing somehow that it was the start of something. Something that would impact me more than I could grasp. **My heart was racing.**

I remember those first few hours without my parents as a blur of

names and cheers and smiles.

I was alone at a residential camp for the first time and trying to take it all in. We had gathered in Brock common room, and were listening as a lively counsellor named Jeanette talked about respect, creativity and spirit. I remember thinking - this is



who I want to be, this colourfully-dressed, confident, hilarious and inspiring woman. I had never met anyone so alive. Jeanette was everything I hoped I would grow up to be.

And it happened before I knew it. After 4 years as a camper, I received that magical phone call from Julie confirming that I had been chosen to join

the staff team. I was standing in my kitchen looking out of the window, stifling tears of happiness as a long-standing dream of mine came true. As I started my new journey on the Centauri staff, I never lost that original feeling in the pit of my stomach. **The same nervous, excited energy I'd felt at the start of every summer** when I drove down dusty South Chippawa Road, towards my summer home.

In my new role as a Centauri counsellor, **I grew into the person I had wanted to be** since the first day I set foot on camp. I learned patience, and a new form of attachment - the kind an adult feels for the youth they care for and mentor. To my own campers, I became the counsellor I had once admired; a positive role model who would always listen, who was supernaturally energetic, boundlessly fun, full of exciting ideas and endlessly supportive. And it was all so easy. Don't get me wrong, counselling is a challenging and difficult job, but somehow it is also effortless when you are working for others, and for a camp philosophy you believe in.

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Contributors... Julie Hartley, Craig Hartley, Aaron Alviano, Andrea Pelletier, Emma Grace Wilson, Ely Henry, Patricia Foster, Becky Yaffa

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Teaching and caring for the extraordinary campers who come to Centauri has been the most enriching experience of my life.

Giving creative youth a safe place to grow, express themselves, feel confident and proud of their talents - it's all I could ask for in a summer job. Along the way, while coordinating the Leaders-in-Training Program and instructing photography and fine art workshops, I discovered a passion for teaching that I will take with me into my future.

Centauri will always be the place where I grew into myself, and I am so very excited to be returning again in 2011, this time beginning a new journey as a Program Director. When Julie offered me a place on the teaching faculty it felt like that first day all over again. Incredibly, after all these years, **the idea of driving towards the green roofs of Centauri still makes my heart beat faster.**

Andrea Pelletier

Talented in photography, fine art, design, leadership and teaching, Andrea gained her skills at OCAD, Ryerson University... and Centauri. She joins our Program Director team this summer to teach Art & Design in session one.

What a Summer Camp Should Be

My experience of camps, before I found Centauri, wasn't positive. I was bullied, ignored and miserable. I thought camps were just a form of babysitting. All that changed when I came across a website for an arts camp in Niagara.



I was a camper for four summers at Centauri and it completely changed my perspective of what summer camp is and should be. Centauri provided me with an environment where anything was possible. Throughout the camp, there is an overwhelming sense of inclusiveness, a sense of family. **Everyone you encounter genuinely loves being at camp**, which was something I had never experienced before. Here, my counsellors were caring and most importantly, they took the time to really get to know each and every camper.

No one was bullied, ignored or miserable. I was surprised how twelve short days could have such a profound effect on my confidence and self-esteem - one that lasted well beyond the end of summer. Centauri taught me what summer camp can be. It's now my second year on staff at Centauri. I am passionate about my job because I know first hand the impact I have on the lives of my campers. I've seen from both sides how **a positive experience at summer camp is truly life changing.**

Becky Yaffa

Becky took film, art, dance and music programs with us over four summers, before joining us as a camp counsellor in 2010.

A Message to New Campers

Before my first day, two summers ago, I worried that I wouldn't make friends and that I wouldn't fit in - but the moment I met my counsellors, I knew I would love Centauri. The warm greetings of Lauren and Maria made me feel right at home. Some of my bunkmates were new too, and so we understood one another's nervousness. My second-year bunkmates helped us all settle in. In our first dorm hour, we played a "get-to-know-you" game. I made friends quickly, and we still



keep in touch. The food at Centauri rocks - you never know what's for lunch or dinner, and it's always a nice surprise. Since I am vegetarian, the kitchen made

sure I got a delicious version of whatever meal they served. A highlight was waffle breakfasts! At my first spirit dinner, "High School Musical", I had a blast, as I did at all the spirit dinners. What beats jumping on your chair dressed as Sharpay and belting out the words to "We're all in this together"?

One of my favourite evening programs of all time included the Hungarian Horntail from Harry Potter. The staff were dragons, and we ran around the camp talking to them. Another reason Centauri is really special is the songs that my counsellors sang for us before bed. I looked forward to them all day. They were relaxing, and made you feel sleepy.

So, if you're thinking about coming to Centauri (or coming back)—I'll see you all there this summer!

Emma Grace Wilson, age 11

Emma Grace has attended Centauri for the past two summers, taking programs in theatre and film



In the Footsteps of Classic Writers

A Report on the Centauri International Tour, August 2010

This was what we had waited for. This was what followed the seven-hour trip spent squashed in an airplane.

This was the trip of a lifetime.

Within four days we were swept from the heather-crowned hills of Haworth to the cobblestone streets of York still echoing with history, to the salt-tinged seaside air of Whitby. We explored, investigated and inquired, notebooks



flourishing and cameras at the ready. We travelled back to the Viking era and rocketed through time to the present.

By the time the fifteen of us made it Robin Hood's Bay for our writing retreat, it felt like we'd been friends forever.

Robin Hood's Bay was an idyllic setting for our writing retreat, which looked down towards the sea and out across the town with its narrow cobblestone streets and quaint boutiques. We spent five days there, composing and sharing poems or prose, guided by our resident writer Rommi Smith. In addition there were games to play, breath-taking walks across the cliffs, and challenges to overcome – like cooking a full-blown meal for the first time. I'm still surprised no one burned anything!



So what did I retain most from all this? I learned that Northern England passes from sun to storm and back again in seconds. I learned how to *properly* eat bread with jam and clotted cream. I learned that the best fish-and-chips are served by the world's crankiest workers at

a hole-in-the-wall cafe in Robin Hood's Bay. Most of all, ***I learned that I met fourteen people whom I shall never, ever, forget.***

Patricia Foster

Patricia was a tour participant on the 2010 international tour to England.

There is still time to join us for the 2011 Centauri International Tour! We're flying to London, England, for three days of sightseeing and theatre, then travelling North to Stratford-upon-Avon for world class performances in their brand new theatre. We'll tour castles, visit Neolithic tombs, hike glorious scenery, tour gorgeous villages, take acting workshops and even soar into the sky on the London Eye! Limited space still remains on the tour so call now! 416 766 7124 - we'll have to close registration soon!



Launching a Career in the Arts!

While our campers follow varied careers once they become too old to return to camp, many do make a life in the arts. We decided to ask one of our alumni who has done just that: what is it like to begin an arts career, and what advice would you give campers hoping to do this?

Ely Henry attended Centauri for 6 summers. Now, he performs with The Classic Supremes and Second City's Puppet Company. Other credits include roles in the movies "Mean Girls" and "Cheaper by the Dozen 2". He is a graduate of The Second City Conservatory. Ely's advice:

"When performing comedy and improv, we're often asked to do ridiculous things. This leaves us with two choices: 1. Worry about how stupid we look or 2. Commit to the performance with all our hearts. Which option would you choose? Obviously the second one. No audience wants to watch a show where performers don't believe what they're doing.

This is the same as surviving in any art form. If you decide you want to sing, act, paint, dance or whatever, you've got to launch yourself at it heart and soul. Surviving in the arts really comes down to how much you want it! If you want to survive, then guess what? You will."



Ely Henry

Centauri: Reaching Out!

This is the time of year when we reach out to communities, making sure that as many people as possible learn about Centauri! We're proud of the personal connections we make as we do this - sponsoring a film festival, writing articles about summer camp for newspapers and magazines, attending camp fairs all over Ontario and reaching out to teachers in creative ways. Julie taught a workshop again at the *Conference of Drama & Dance Educators* in the Fall, and will be leading a drama workshop at the *Conference for Independent Teachers of English*. Once again, we're **offering free guest workshops in drama departments in schools** throughout Southern Ontario. If your drama department would be interested in a free guest workshop, please contact us now! In addition, if you have a group of friends who may be interested in joining you at Centauri, and you live within 2 hours of Toronto, we would be happy to arrange a private slide presentation for you in your home.



Julie teaching drama in Mexico

Call now if you would like posters or brochures to pass to your teachers or friends.

Spring Events: Important Dates For Your Diary!

★ **Creative Ideas for
Play Creation and Rehearsal:** ★
A one-day workshop for Drama Teachers

Sunday 10 April 2011, 10am to 5pm
Baby Point Clubhouse, 71 Baby Point Rd, Toronto
Instructor: Julie Hartley

This training event is being advertised to drama teachers across Ontario and is one of the ways we are sharing the expertise we've gathered over the years! There are only 20 spaces available, and spots have already begun to fill. Any parent or alumni interested in joining us for this day should call or email us now for further information.

★ **Centauri Open House
& Staff Celebration** ★

Saturday 9 April 2011, 2.30pm to 5pm
Baby Point Club House, 71 Baby Point Rd, Toronto

Whether you are just considering Centauri, joining us for the first time this year, or a long-standing camper with us, you won't want to miss this event! Join us for a **Celebration of Centauri Staff**, as talented program directors demonstrate their skill with readings, performances and lively discussion. This will be followed by a **meet-and-greet for campers new and returning**, and finally a **presentation by the directors**, to help all our new campers prepare for the summer! Parents and campers are invited to attend this free arts and information event: learn more about Centauri, meet friends new and old, and get excited for the summer! Space is limited, so please RSVP to julie@centauriartscamp.com

You Talk... We Listen!

At the end of every session, our campers complete evaluation forms to tell us what they liked about their time at Centauri. The comments are always overwhelmingly positive, and a selection of quotes from these are included below. You may find your own words here! Sometimes, campers also suggest things they would like to see at camp the following summer. In 2010, several campers asked that **one of the daily free times be extended from 45 minutes to a full hour**, to allow more 'down' time between activities and in 2011, this is exactly what we're going to do! It also seems a lot of people dislike welcome games on the first day of sessions, and would prefer an **increased time in program**, instead. Done! In 2011, **the arrival times for every session will change** slightly as a result of the new format, so please read the Parent Manual carefully... but we're confident the first day of each session will remain as spectacular as ever!

Here is a selection of comments by our 2010 campers:

"Carol [my counsellor] was fun to be with and welcomed me with open arms. It was my first year, but I was able to jump right in."

"Spirit suppers were my favourite thing, seeing the entire camp so into the events. That kind of spirit can't be seen anywhere else in the world!"

"This was the best summer of my life. I am so proud of myself for what I did."

"No matter who you are or where you're from, you can find a second home here."

Cell Phones at Centauri???

Centauri will continue with its brand new cell phone policy into 2011. While we prefer cell phones to remain at home, older campers who feel the need to do so may bring their cell phone. Phones are stored in the office and can be accessed during designated phone times and used in a designated, supervised area only. Our goal is to prevent phones from interfering with the unique atmosphere of camp, while welcoming teens who strongly prefer not to leave their phone behind.



Spotlight on...

SESSION 4

If you've been around for a while, you'll notice that this year we're doing something very different with August at Centauri! In place of the 12 and 11 day programs, we're expanding Session 3 to a full 14 days, and transforming the remaining 8 days of the summer into a distinctly different experience for our campers.

Introducing the brand new Session 4 "Centauri Arts Extremes"! This new session should meet the changing needs of many Centauri families. Firstly, **the session is shorter**, making it appealing to campers with a busy schedule, who might not otherwise be able to come. For older campers, Session 4 will offer a **full five hours a day in program**, replacing afternoon electives with a more intense focus on their first choice arts activity. If you're looking to build an art or writing portfolio, practice audition skills or experience full immersion in the arts, this will definitely appeal. For younger campers, activity choices are built into each program, ensuring a healthy range of options at camp.

Despite this change, however, Session 4 will still offer our campers everything about Centauri that they have grown to love. A vibrant community. Crazy-fun spirit suppers. A cultural banquet. Time to hang out with like-minded friends. Festivals, evening programs, optional sports... and memories to last a lifetime.



If you have already booked for an earlier session, you can add Session 4 for as little as \$795. Call us for details.

Festivals for Summer 2011!

Our counsellors are already hard at work coming up with the creative ideas that will lead to terrific festivals and evening programs at camp this summer! We'll definitely be having another film-in-a-day festival, but with the final film premieres to take place a few days later, allowing time for thorough editing. Justin and Geoff have suggested a James Bond day, with an ongoing plot throughout the festival, and Bethany and Becky are proposing a SuperMario celebration with all characters played by campers and all kinds of wacky challenges! Julie's offering her Backpacking Challenge again this year as it was hugely popular - but this time we'll be traveling round the entire world on a limited budget and in an exciting race against time! Ian's Blackthorn Theatre Company will also be attending camp in session 3 to run a thrilling Medieval festival!



UPDATE

The Centauri Rosebud Academy, India!

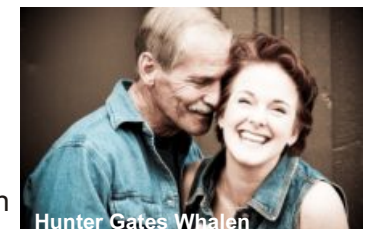
Thanks to all the staff and campers who helped with our fundraiser in 2009, the Centauri Rosebud Academy will be officially opened within a matter of weeks! Of course, we have already been educating our first few students in Mirik for the past months, but there's nothing like making it official!

Now that the school is a reality, we need to turn our attention to material supplies - books, computers, desks and so on. To do this, we're putting together a nifty little Centauri Survival Pack which you can purchase from the online Camp Store in Spring. It will contain camp essentials such as sunscreen and clown noses (!!) and 100% of the profits will go to our school in India. Secondly, in the Fall we will be holding a Festival of the Arts in Toronto, showcasing the summer work of our campers and staff - films, art, writing and more. Everyone is invited - campers, parents, staff and all alumni! Our school in India will present an exciting opportunity for exchange of ideas and art between our campers and their students in the future.



CONGRATULATIONS!

In the Fall, Hunter Gates became Hunter Gates Whalen and Robyn Levine became Robyn Levine Shapiro as both staff members celebrated their weddings on the same weekend! We'd like to congratulate Hunter, Robyn and their partners on behalf of all of us at Centauri! Contratulations are also due to Ian Walsh, who became a dad in early January. In Ian's words, his little son is "perfect".



STAFF NEWS

The sensational staff at Centauri Summer Arts Camp are as deeply immersed in their art in the real world as they are at camp! Here's a guide to the recent achievements of some of our favourite people!

J-M Erlendson has just finished recording a demo with the acappella group he started just 4 months ago, Countermeasure.

Alanna Balicki recently launched Suitcase Theatre's new website: www.suitcasetheatre.com - check it out for information on her free puppetry performance on Family Day!

Gillian Sze second poetry book, *The Anatomy of Clay*, launches this April. For a taste, one of the poems, "The Right Tenor," is published in the latest issue of *Prairie Fire*.

Lesley Simpson (our new Journalism instructor) has a new board book out, **The Hug** (Annick Press, 2010) as well as new book called **Yuvi's Candy Tree** (Kar-Ben Books, 2011) that she will be launching in Israel this year.

Lauren Saunders has just finished directing a production of Anouilh's "Antigone" and has just been cast in the world premiere of a new Canadian play: "Old Enough To Kill," by John Lazarus.

Jessica Kiley will be participating in V-Day Western as an actor in *A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant and a Prayer*.

Justin Buyukozer will be in "Cabaret" for three weeks in March. He's also working on a clown piece for York University's Theatre Labs.

Naz Yeganeh (Camp Nurse) is now working in the field of pediatrics and will soon be producing and recording her new songs

Julie Hartley (Camp Director) was awarded the Peace Poetry Prize, UK, in November and has work forthcoming in *Taddle Creek Magazine* and *Event Magazine*.

Staying Connected Throughout the Year

We'll be sending out regular newsletters by email over the coming months, to update you on exciting news for the summer as it becomes available. If you haven't been receiving our emails, **please check your spam filters** - many correspondences disappear into cyberspace that way!

Centauri runs an arts blog that is usually updated several times a week. In addition to camp news, the blog provides links to terrific theatre, writing competitions, arts and educational resources and professional work featuring our staff and campers. You can find our blog on the home page of the camp website, and on Facebook. **Use the RIS Feed** to receive notifications whenever we update.

Campers: why not follow us on Facebook? Find the camp page at <http://www.facebook.com/CentauriArtsCamp> and connect with camp friends, or future friends who may have registered for the same session and program as you this summer! You can also follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/CentauriArts>

Parents, Staff and Alumni: Julie and Craig Hartley are now on LinkedIn and we'd love to add you to our contacts, particularly if you are also active in the world of arts and education! We also have a Centauri Group you can join. **See you on LinkedIn.**

... and finally, there's no better way to stay involved than to connect in person! After all, that's what camp's about! Join us in Toronto this Spring for a **Camp Open House** and **for our special fundraiser** as we raise money for supplies for our school in Mirik, India!

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Centauri - Celebrating an Exceptional Staff

When we seek to inspire our staff in pre-camp there is one important message we always convey. If a child chooses to learn an activity like water skiing, chances are it will excite them even with the most boring instructor. But for a camper who wants to explore arts, the teacher is everything. Centauri is not facilities, or weather, or location - though we score high on all three! Centauri is, quite literally, the staff. People who come together to teach, lead and inspire others. Andrea's article on the front page points out just how vital this is. At Centauri, we choose our staff with care. They are exceptional human beings with the very best character traits who are talented in the arts, as teachers and as youth leaders, too. And since most of our staff stay with us for years, we invest further in their training, helping them to expand skills that will help them - and our campers - in future years.

Below is a list of staff members returning to us this summer, showing the number of years they have already been with Centauri, either as a camper or on staff. The pathway from camper to staff is not automatic. We receive over 30 staff applications from our 18 year old campers each year, and select only 5-7 to join our team.

16 years

Craig Hartley
Julie Hartley
Jordi Hepburn*
John Michael Erlendson*

14 years

Alanna Balicki*
Daniel Poulin *

12 years

Cheryl Bernknopf

11 years

Justin Buyukozer*
Emma Moore*

10 years

Katie Hemingway*
Calypso Taylor *
Carol Cheyne*

9 years

Emily English*
Andrea Pelletier*
Jeremy Large*
Erica Cheyne*

8 years

Aaron Alviano
Matt Stein*
Darwin Lyons*
Maria Rothenberg*
Lauren Saunders*
Luke Mochrie*
Rhiann Moore*

7 years

Eleonore Prokop
Hunter Gates Whalen
Sid Wilson*
Orion Taylor*

6 years

Evan Moore*
Geoff Ernst*
Brenna Sobanski*
Melissa Gallant*
Megan Abley*
Joey Hemingway*

5 years

Clarissa Manning*
Jessica Kiley*
Bethany Gray*
Megan Ruhig*
Sayer Rippey*
Ned Seager*

4 years

Sofia Bohdanowicz

3 years

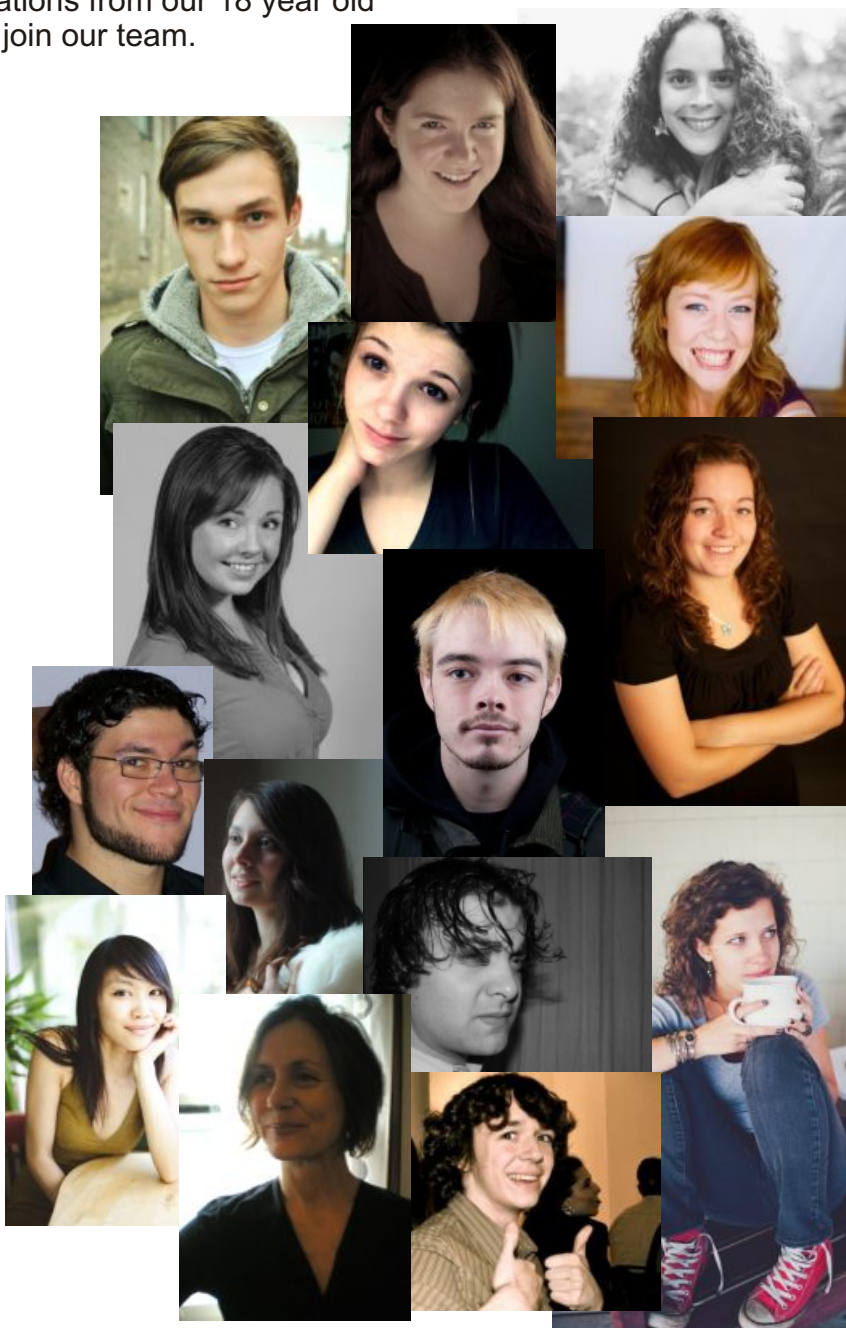
Spencer Barton*

2 years

Robyn Levine Shapiro
Gillian Sze

1 year

Violet Chepil
Ian Walsh
Veronica Lincoln
Valerie Buhagiar



** indicates that the staff member was a camper before joining us on staff*

LOOKING BACK AT 2010...



BATMAN FESTIVAL



HAWAIIAN BANQUET

A Message from a Camp Parent

"I want to thank all the Centauri staff for my daughter's wonderful camp experience this past summer. She has always enjoyed summers at camp but this year, at Centauri, she absolutely loved camp. She was deliriously happy. She raved about the counsellors, the programs and all the other kids. She said everyone felt welcome and that she could be herself. As she said, "no one judges you there".

Our daughter spent last evening telling us wonderful stories about her month at Centauri. She was crying "from happiness" as she retold hilarious episodes of life at camp. She said she misses camp already. And she is already pressuring us for an even longer time at Centauri next summer.

The programs were exceptional. Our daughter tells us she learned more in Sofia's film camp than she ever expected. Her time in film camp has really prepped her for her media arts class in September. Then, in her second session, Veronica re-ignited her passion for dance. She can't wait to start her dance classes again.

This is also the first time in her camping history that counsellors have had such a significant impact on our daughter's camp experience - Maria and Becky were fantastic. The counsellors made dorm life fun and warm and safe. Apparently "even teenagers like the their bedtime hugs".

As I listened to our child describe her time at Centauri, the only word that I could find that could aptly describe her time with you was...magical...absolutely magical.

Thank you and we'll see you next year."



MUSIC FESTIVAL



FILM-IN-A-DAY FESTIVAL



ART SPECIALTIES



GLEE!

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SUMMER ARTS CAMP

www.centauriartscamp.com

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