

To Mars and Beyond- A Reflection on VBS (Vacation Bible School) Summer 2019

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Vacation Bible School has always been one of Colchester Federated Church's largest community outreach programs, and this year was no exception. We had 63 youth participate from our community along with 52 youth and adult volunteers. Our volunteers were a true representation of our intergenerational focus here at CFC. We pride ourselves on working together to make VBS a free program, open to the wider community. This program remains free thanks to a very generous donor who purchases the curriculum each year, as well as donations that come in from the congregation and our VBS families. I am truly blessed to have such an outpouring of support.

The energy this year was truly OUT OF THIS WORLD! It was so wonderful to see the many interactions between the youth and the adults. At times, I think our adult volunteers were having more fun! The children were in awe—seeing scripture come to life and getting an opportunity to act out stories they had just heard. As part of the sciency-fun, I was able to collaborate with Bacon Academy's (our local high school) Robotics Team. The youth received a hands-on experience with the team's robots. Kids even had the opportunity to drive/control the robots. That was one of the biggest hits of the week, besides our annual tie-dying day of course!

This year our VBS embarked on a trip to outer space. Our mission was to help the Starship Galixion gather key elements to power up their stranded ship. Throughout the week, the children had to collect these elements to share with the Starship Galixion so they could continue their mission. The five elements were: faith, boldness, kindness, thankfulness, and hope. Each day started off with a fun and exciting assembly time where kids got to enjoy a skit (put on by myself and [Pastor Lauren](#)), hear about the day's mission, as well as learn American Sign Language. All week long we explored the five elements through stories, games, crafts, music, and snacks.

Children also learned the importance of mission work and giving back. This year we partnered with our local schools' social workers to help fill the snack pantries. Families were asked to donate individual snack items that were divided among our four public schools so that every child will have access to snacks during the day, knowing that it's hard to learn on an empty stomach.

In the end, VBS holds a special place in my heart. I pray that all our churches can experience God's love working among children and youth in our communities. For some, this is their only opportunity to hear and learn of God's love. The fact that I am a part of this experience is priceless.

God's abundant blessings to you all in your ministry.

*Editor's note: The curriculum purchased for the 2019 VBS at Colchester Federated Church was Cokesbury's **To Mars and Beyond!** Cokesbury's VBS materials are fun, innovative, and have a theological framework compatible with most United Church of Christ congregations.