

Getting In Touch With His Identity

Author(s): JEREMY HUNT, Daily News-Record **Date:** July 21, 2010 **Section:**

HARRISONBURG - Julie Caran and her husband didn't know anything about **Ethiopia** until two years ago. In April 2008, the Harrisonburg couple began the process of adopting a child from the African nation and started learning more about its history and culture.

The Carans want their son, Abinet, whom they recently brought home and who turns 2 in August, to be connected to his past.

"It's part of his identity, and it's important for him to know where he comes from," Julie Caran, 33, said. "I think a lot of adopted kids, once they become teenagers, they have a lot of questions about who they are and where they came from."

Their educational experience got a boost last summer from the inaugural Ethiopian Heritage and Culture Camp at Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center.

The second annual camp, which Caran helped organize, begins Thursday at Massanetta Springs. More than 250 people from the East Coast are registered for the camp, which runs through Sunday.

It features workshops, classes and activities. Registration is closed but people who want to check it out are welcome to stop by, Caran said.

The camp is unique, according to its organizers, in that it's the only one in the U.S. for all families raising Ethiopian-American children, whether the parents are adoptive or biological.

"Our objective is to integrate and address the needs of all Ethiopian children living in the U.S.," according to information about the camp.

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