

learned last week, and how to say ‘good morning?’” The inevitable chorus of “Meeeeeeeeee” arises from the cross-legged crew as hands wave wildly. One small girl proudly says, “Spanish—it’s *buenos días*.”

We learn various stretches, the week’s new skill (the pivot), a song or two (accompanied by some meticulously choreographed dance moves) and the new language of the week (Hawaiian, which means the word to remember for next week is “aloha”). Finally, we discuss the seven virtues of ROCK: justice, love, hope, self-control, courage, faith and wisdom. After the business matters are wrapped up, equipment and snack leaders are appointed, team members are selected and we move on to the serious stuff.

I’m in the first group to scrimmage. The heart of my inner third-grader sinks to my stomach as I watch nine-year-old Joi dribble through her legs and make a perfect three-pointer. I slink off to my proper place among the granny-style shooters. My new friends and I complete rounds of baskets punctuated by improvised cheers for our team, complete with spirit fingers and cartwheels.

Amid the organized chaos, whistles announce when it’s time to rotate to the various stations: scrimmage, outdoor free-for-all, skill tutorial and an art station where the kids work on a project based on the week’s virtue (love). Between bouts of laughter and a little teasing, a final whistle announces the long-awaited snack time. Our team colonizes the stairs outside, cracking jokes while chomping on apples. For me, the experience has been a nostalgic revisit to gym days past, but for my teammates, it’s something much more important—a glimpse of the safe, carefree childhood every kid deserves.

PUPPY *Love*

BY ANDREA ARRIA-DEVOE

I’m filling up a plastic bin with clean plush toys when Corinne Dowling, the founder and executive director of Give a Dog a Bone, confides that the adoption rate of her dogs is low. “It’s something we have to live with,” she says. Corinne is the Helen Prejean of the canine world: She works with the “invisible” dogs who are caught in the human legal

