

Healthy Habits with Growing Girl Scouts
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For my summer enrichment project, I partnered with the Girl Scouts, Hornets' Nest Council in Charlotte, North Carolina, to teach nutrition and every day wellness at day camps around the Piedmont. This council serves over 22,000 girls and adults in eight counties in the Carolinas. I spent over fourteen years as a Girl Scout throughout grade school, and I had the privilege to receive my Gold Award through this council as well. Returning to Girl Scouts meant a great deal to me because being a Girl Scout helped propel me to pursue medicine and service so boldly. The Girl Scout mission states, "Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place." The objectives of my project were to address a variety of health topics and address issues related to body image and self-confidence, and these objectives lend themselves to empowering these girls and fulfilling the Girl Scout mission.

The Girl Scouts, Hornets' Nest Council hosted four week-long day camps this summer. Two weeks of camp were hosted at the Girl Scouts Service Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the other two weeks of camp were hosted at the Dale Earnhardt Environmental Leadership Campus at Oak Springs in Statesville, North Carolina. Over the four weeks of camp, I was able to work with over 150 girls ranging from 1st through 6th grade. The last two weeks of camp also offered grant money to Girl Scouts from underprivileged backgrounds to attend camp for the first time. Every Thursday night the girls had the option to spend the night at camp past the usual day camp hours. I prepared program activities for the girls every Thursday of camp, and then stayed the night through Friday of day camp.

For the first week of camp in Charlotte, I prepared materials for the girls to assemble and decorate first aid kits, and we discussed the importance of first aid in Girl Scouts and every day

activities. The first aid kits included gloves, bandages, gauze, antibiotic ointment, hand sanitizer, sunscreen (very handy at camp!), tissues, and alcohol pads. The girls also did a magazine collage called “Eat This! Not That!” where we talked about the types of foods that they should be eating often and others that should be eaten sparingly.



Three campers with their first aid kits



Eat This! Not That! Collages

As part of the nutrition discussions, I also introduced the concept of empty calories particularly in beverages. I showed them the measured amount of sugar in drinks like apple juice, Coke, Mountain Dew, chocolate milk, and vitamin water. The girls were extremely intrigued by this demonstration and had a lot of questions about what they should drink as alternatives to high calorie beverages.

In an all-camp session (all of the age groups together) later in the day, we did a group activity where each group was assigned the lyrics of a Disney song. The girls were challenged to make a short group presentation about the meaning of the song and how it might relate to self-confidence and Girl Scouts. The groups had various songs such as *Frozen*'s “Let It Go” and *Mulan*'s “Reflection,” and all of the groups gave a great effort to understand the meaning behind

the words of the songs. It was definitely a challenging activity, but they embraced the activity, and we were able to have a good discussion about how the lyrics of songs often say more than we think.

During the second week of camp in Charlotte, North Carolina, I focused a lot of time on nutrition, food groups, and food labels. First, we discussed the five food groups designated by MyPlate and the types of foods in each group. Then the younger girls (1st through 3rd grade) did a relay game where there were over 100 different names of foods on small slips of paper, and they had to organize the foods into the five food groups plus a ‘Sweets’ group.



Winners of the Food Group Relay



A group of girls working to finish their lists

The older girls (4th through 6th grade) did a different activity with food labels. I prepared empty food containers of common foods like cereal, apples, chips, bread, fruit snacks, and other assorted snacks.



Each girl used one of the foods to fill out a food label worksheet, and then we filled out a chart with the various food label information to determine which food was the best snack to choose.

This activity really sparked a lot of discussion among the girls as they didn't know that one serving of Oreos only included two cookies and that Vitamin Water actually contains a great deal of empty calories of added sugar. The girls were really interested in reading food labels that during lunch I had a whole table of girls pointing out the calories in their lunches.



Reading nutrition labels

Food	Calories	Total Fat %	Fiber %	Protein %	Vit A	Calcium	Iron	Vit C
2 Ruffles Chips	120	5%	5%	2g	0	2%	2%	0
3 APPLES	80	0%	8%	0g	0	8%	0	3%
3 vitamin/water	120c	0%	0%	0g	0%	0%	0%	100%
4 bread, white wheat	110	2%	12%	6g	0%	9%	8%	0%
4 Pasta	200	3%	8%	7g	0%	9%	10%	0%
3 KIND bars	150	8%	10%	2g	0	2	6	0
3 oreo farts	200	8%	4%	3	10	10	10	0
2 Nutella	200	18%	5%	2g	0	4	4	0

Food Label Chart

In the afternoon all-camp session, we did two activities related to understanding different identities we have. The girls each received four sticky notes to complete four "I am..." statements.



Then, each girl was able to decorate a journal with flower petals on which they wrote their “I am...” statements. When you give kids some markers, glue, and scissors, they will always surprise you with their enthusiasm and creativity---and they didn’t let me down!



For weeks three and four, camp was at the Environmental Leadership Campus at Oak Springs in Statesville, and the camp has over 700 acres of land. This location provided a full camp experience for the girls, and many of the girls were able to come to camp for the first time. During week three, I wanted to give the girls a hands-on experience of how to make a healthy snack since they might not get a lot of exposure to eating a variety of fruits and vegetables. I brought ingredients for the girls to make veggie pizzas with broccoli, carrots, green peppers, red peppers, and cucumbers. The base of the pizza is made from low-fat crescent rolls and the sauce is a mixture of cream cheese, sour cream, and ranch herb flavoring. I asked all of the girls to have an open mind and to at least try two different vegetables, and they exceeded my

expectations. I had a few girls tell me that they wanted to make this at home and that they had not tried some of the vegetables before and really enjoyed them.



Preparing the pizzas



Variety of vegetables to try

During the afternoon all-camp session, I had the girls do the “I am...” statements with folders to decorate. This group of girls was also very creative with their craft, and they were excited to have something to take home from camp.



Girls decorating their folders

I also had the girls do a first aid challenge. The girls were in four groups, and each group had different first aid supplies (Sam splints, sticks and gauze wrap, a blanket and wrap, cardboard and wrap) to splint a ‘broken leg’ of one of the girls in the group. The girls seemed to really

enjoy the hands-on first aid experience and have the chance to hypothetically ‘save’ one of their friends.



For week four of camp in Statesville, I taught a lesson about bone health and calcium. First, we completed a worksheet about foods that have calcium to help them understand that more than just dairy products have calcium. Then, the girls put together a life-size skeleton puzzle and then had to match names of bones on the skeleton. I finished the lesson with a skeleton craft where the girls used Q-tips or straws to make a paper skeleton.



Teaching about foods with calcium



Girls working on skeleton craft



Life-size skeletons



Skeleton craft

For the last all-camp session, the girls made dreamcatchers using paper plates and materials from nature. They wrote their dreams for their future around the outside of their plates. Some of their dreams included being a veterinarian, marine scientists, teachers, doctors, and even fashionistas.



Various dreamcatchers

In between all of these activities, I also got to practice my fire building, eat a few smores, canoe, slip-N-slide, learn camp songs, and spend time with the other counselors who proved to be exceptional role models for these girls at camp.



Post-Camp Counselor Dinner



Practicing fire-building

Four weeks went incredibly fast with these vivacious and energetic girls, and I am grateful for the time I got to spend getting to know each of them. I was encouraged weekly when I saw them engaged in learning how to live healthier and to be confident every day. From learning about nutrition labels and food groups to trying new vegetables, the girls consistently impressed me with their knowledge and interest to learn more. I hope that I will be able to stay involved with Girl Scouts as I continue my career in medicine, and this experience has helped me connect to girls in various stages and backgrounds of life. I am confident that this experience will help me be a prepared primary care physician and allow me to communicate and teach my future patients with ease.