

Brody Summer Enrichment Program: BEAM girls service project

This summer I had the opportunity to lead a service project with my fellow classmate and Brody Scholar Stephanie Maxwell. She and I both recognized a need in Greenville for healthy lifestyle education for young girls in a way that was fun, easy to understand, and applicable to their everyday lives. We named our project BEAM girls (Bright, Empowered, And Motivated girls) and designed the sessions to inspire the girls we worked with to learn about easy and sustainable ways to stay healthy. We were fortunate enough to be able to work with two different groups in Greenville: the Boys and Girls Club (Grady-White Boats/ E.R. Lewis Family Unit) and Operation Sunshine, Inc.

We were able to have six sessions with girls between the ages of 5 and 13 at Operation Sunshine, and four sessions with girls between the ages of 12 and 15 at the Boys and Girls Club. These sessions are outlined below:

June 20: Operation Sunshine—Photography and frame-making

In this session, we began by playing icebreakers and getting to know the girls through introductory health surveys and games. Through focusing on photography, we hoped to make a connection between who and what each of the girls valued in their lives and to finding a way to capture those people and things through photography. We highlighted general concepts in photograph such as light and composition (angles, the rule of thirds, close-ups) and emphasized how photography can be therapeutic by promoting self-esteem, creating order, encouraging creativity, etc. The girls were given disposable cameras to take home and document family members and other people and parts of their lives that were important to them. We made picture frames for them to put their best picture in, and concluded the session with journaling about someone that stands out as a role model to them. Our snack for this session was healthy fruit smoothies, and the girls loved it!

June 27: Operation Sunshine—Healthy Relationships (partner with Demi Dawkins and Shannon Banks, recipients of the Tiana Nicole Williams Endowment)

Two girls from the Class of 2014 were able to join us in this session and lead a discussion on what healthy relationships do and do not look like. Demi and Shannon led a Q&A introduction and had the girls act out several skits of both healthy and unhealthy relationship interactions. The girls then came up with lists of supportive vs. harmful behaviors and identified people they could contact if they ever felt threatened by a significant other. We provided “Ants on a Log” snacks of celery, peanut butter, and raisins. For the younger girls, we tailored the questions more towards healthy family and friendships, and for the older girls we were able to focus more on dating relationships. This session was an effective way to teach the girls the very basics of treating others well and recognizing how you should be treated well in return.

June 29: Boys and Girls Club—Healthy Relationships

The session described above was repeated for the older girls in the Boys and Girls Club.

July 6: Boys and Girls Club—Meditation and Relaxation Techniques

This week’s session revolved around ways to manage stress with a focus on meditation, quiet time, and relaxation strategies. We purchased yoga mats for the girls, and encouraged them to use their mats as their own personal “sacred space” at home for 10 minutes of relaxation a day. We took stress inventory surveys and reviewed three major ways to relieve that stress: Guided Imagery, Controlled

Breathing, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation. During our time, the girls were relaxed by Mountain Stream music and went through each of the three relaxation techniques. Our snack for the day was healthy fruit smoothies. We were amazed at how much they loved the session, and found it to be very relevant and useful for the girls.

July 11: Operation Sunshine—Meditation and Relaxation Techniques

The session above was repeated with the younger girls of Operation Sunshine, and we adapted without the yoga mats as the stores ran out of stock. Our snack for the day was a homemade trail mix.

July 12: Operation Sunshine—Nutrition

We began this session by playing nutrition games—one involved guessing the fruit or vegetable, and the other involved guessing the ingredients in healthy recipes. We had a guest speaker Abby Lancaster from the Pediatric Healthy Weight Clinic come and teach the girls about Red Light, Green Light nutrition, serving sizes, and the food groups. One major emphasis of the session was the importance of exercise daily as part of a healthy lifestyle (and even what to do on rainy days!), and how to limit sugary drinks. We served sugar free popsicles and apples and peanut butter for snack.

July 13: Boys and Girls Club—Nutrition

The session described above was repeated with the Boys and Girls Club.

July 18: Operation Sunshine—Body Language/Healthy Friendships and Cookie Decorating

This week we focused on the importance of body language and non-verbal communication and how these can affect relationships, represent emotions, and display how we feel about others and ourselves. We got the girls thinking about the topic with charades, where the girls acted out emotions without saying any words. Our goal was to teach the girls how their own emotions and others' emotions come across via body language, and how to use this understanding as a way to empathize with friends, communicate their own feelings effectively, and carry themselves confidently.

We followed this by teaching cookie decorating, a fun hobby and great stress reliever. We encouraged the girls to give one cookie away to a friend or family member as a gesture of their appreciation for them. This was a fun and informative session that the girls really enjoyed!

July 25: Operation Sunshine—Zumba and Dancing for Health

The health benefits of dance are numerous, and our aim in this session was to show the girls how fun and energizing dance can be. First we made maracas to get the girls in the spirit of Latin dance. Stephanie Maxwell led the girls in a Zumba class, where we all danced along to Latin music and the girls were able to create some of their own moves for the rest of us to follow. They quickly realized how easy it would be to make up routines in their own rooms at home! We concluded the session by making fresh salsa with baked tortilla chips, and urged all of the girls we met this summer to keep up with the healthy living techniques they learned over the last few weeks.

July 27: Boys and Girls Club—Zumba and Dancing for Health

We repeated the session described above with the Boys and Girls Club.

After the BEAM girls project was completed, I spent a week at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center with Dr. Richard Azizkhan, Surgeon-In-Chief and lifelong role model of mine. It was a moving and meaningful experience to finally meet him after years of following his career after he

repaired a defect I had at birth. I was able to observe several surgeries with him, spend time in his vascular anomalies clinic, and go on rounds with his residents. The week was very busy with four 12-hour days in the hospital, and the time I spent there was incredibly inspiring and insightful. I learned most, however, from watching Dr. Azizkhan interact with his patients in such a loving and relaxed way. He spent up to and over an hour with some of his patients, taking time to listen in a way that I had never observed before. I learned more about empathizing with patients in an hour of observing his bedside manner than I could hope to learn on my own in all four years of medical school. I am so grateful for this experience and for the special relationship I have with him that the Brody family helped me to rekindle this summer. Thank you for the opportunity to learn from a caring surgeon and important figure in my life in addition to serving the community of Greenville this summer.