

Camp Attaway's nature program entered its fourth season during the 2011 summer. Over the past four years, the program has grown into a weekly event that excites both campers and counselors. Due to the generous grant provided by the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation, we were able to expand the program to include several new activities.



We began camp with the idea that we should bring nature to us. Two nature activities took place during the first week of camp. First, campers were given the opportunity to plant vegetable and flower seeds. This activity gave campers the opportunity to nurture and care for something outside of themselves. Campers watered the plants and gave them sunlight and as the days of camp went by

watched the plants sprout and begin to grow. The second activity was new to camp. A naturalist was hired to bring in several reptiles for the campers to see. Not only did the naturalist allow the campers to see and touch the animals, but he also taught them a great deal of information about these rare creatures. Campers were fascinated and excited about seeing the reptiles. One camper said "I liked the snakes and I got to see them and feel them too." Another camper "learned a lot about the different types of lizards that [she] had never heard of." Not only did campers gain new information but were then able to share it with others. This camper told us "the best part was seeing the turtles. I got to teach my little sister what I learned."



This summer marked a new achievement at camp in that we had six counselors in training (CIT). As part of the nature program, we wanted to give the CITs a special opportunity. By working with the Howard County branch of the University of Maryland extension office, we were able to arrange to have a guest speaker meet the CITs at a local park and give a talk about composting. CITs learned about the process of composting and how they can have a positive influence on changing the amount of waste

created by society. The CITs also took the opportunity while at the park to do some boating. CITs got to work on social skills and team work while enjoying an afternoon on the water.

The second focus of the nature program was to bring the campers out into nature. This was accomplished on two different trips, one to Terrapin Adventures and the other to a local stream.

At Terrapin Adventures, campers spent the first part of the afternoon in the woods working on challenges as part of a ropes course. The second part of the afternoon was spent learning about the principles of Leave No Trace.





The last nature activity of the summer was a trip to a local stream. We purchased water quality test kits as well as nets for catching macroinvertebrates. Campers worked in small groups to collect data on temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen. Each camper then took his/her net and collected as many organisms as he/she could.

Campers got to implement some of the Leave No Trace principles from the previous week when exploring the stream. The activity concluded after the whole camp had a discussion about the health of the stream and determined that based on the collected data the stream was healthy!



By doing these activities at camp, campers experienced nature in numerous new ways. Many never participated in nature activities like the ones at camp. By giving campers the opportunity to view nature in a new light, we helped them build a stronger relationship with the environment around them.