

4-H Sustainable You! Camp was a huge success

By Shanna Abatti, Special to this Newspaper | Posted: Thursday, July 21, 2016 12:10 am

Through the generous support of the Vesper Society, the University of California Cooperative Extension of Imperial County 4-H Youth Development Program was able to deliver the second annual 4-H Sustainable You! Day Camp. With more than 30 campers and more than 17 youth staff the camp was a huge success. The youth staff partnered with 4-H, UC CalFresh, and UC FarmSmart staff to deliver quality programming that centered on healthy communities and our environment.

Each day had a different focus or theme, which included air, water, land, energy and food. Each theme had several lessons and hands-on activities which youth staff delivered to campers. Day one focused on air. The campers learned all about air quality and the impact pollutants have on the air we breathe. Campers were given journals with broad concepts each day and at the end of the camp day they would be given the same questions to reflect how their answers may have changed and what they may have learned.

Land day of camp was also fieldtrip day. The campers and staff traveled by bus to the local materials recovery facility and the local landfill. None of the campers or staff had ever visited an MRF before and more than 80 percent had never visited a landfill. A materials recovery facility (MRF pronounced “murf”) is a specialized plant that receives, separates and prepares recyclable materials for marketing to end-user manufacturers.

Campers and staff had a firsthand realization of the volumes of trash that come from recycle bins which need to be methodically separated into various categories of glass, paper, aluminum, tin and plastic, not to mention the unmentionables that inadvertently end up being carelessly tossed in with the rest. Many campers and staff commented that if we all understood just how important it is to be selective when we separate our recyclables into the proper containers, there would be far



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more reusable material and less contamination and effort involved in the process. It really does make a difference and campers and staff became aware of the need to get the word out about this.

On food day, the youth counselors directed the campers through a realm of activities including: harvesting carrots, building garden boxes and planting watermelon, where food comes from, Imperial County local foods and the food mile. The day turned out to be a busy and fun-filled day. The campers loved harvesting the carrots. Some of the comments included: “these taste better than from the store” and “they have a lot of dirt on them because I picked them out of the ground.”

One of the children went home with his big bag of carrots and the camper and his mom made carrot cake for our snack the following day. The youth camp counselors were amazed at the campers’ enthusiasm and joy of picking their own vegetables.

Day four of our Sustainable You! Camp focused on energy. The youth focused on learning about different types of energy sources and the differences between renewable and non-renewable resources. The youth campers strategized ways to conserve the nonrenewable resources that we have and the importance of doing so. The youth were able to view the power of solar energy by creating solar ovens out of pizza boxes. They were also able to test their engineering abilities by fabricating wings for the wind turbines.

We finished the camp with the importance of water and what each of the campers can do to help conserve. Youth campers tried their hands at water-quality testing and even took a virtual tour of the wetlands. Campers, which ranged in age from 9-12, were excited about the activities and how they can positively change their habits. If you would like to know about this camp or upcoming 4-H events and activities please call 760-352-9474.