



Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Celebrating Over 30 Years of Outdoor Education



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Caring About My Planet Program for Girls, Summer 2014 **Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies** **Final Report**

C.A.M.P. Premises & Focus

Caring About My Planet (C.A.M.P.), a collaboration of the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies (CACs) and Haven House, is a summer camp targeting underprivileged girls from the Homer and surrounding areas. This summer camp was first created and conducted by two high school seniors, Katherine Dolma and Taylor Ellison in the summer of 2013 as a result of a Rotary Peace Forum youth project they developed and presented at the 2012 International Rotary Peace Forum in Honolulu, Hawaii. They gave an inspiring presentation about their vision to help promote peace through caring for the environment and their project is a testament to what the Peace Forum promoted: the empowerment of the new generation in their vision for peace. Through their initial work, they have paved the way for CACS to continue to provide leadership opportunities for teens and help provide meaningful experiences to youth in need.

Their pilot camp conducted in 2013 was a success and was conducted with the help of CACS staff and use of our Peterson Bay Field Station facility. In 2014, Katherine approached CACS with the idea of continuing this summer camp in the summer of 2014 (and beyond) and donated \$300 from her Girl Scout Troop earnings to plant the seed money for the continuation of this program.

CAMP was described by Katherine and Taylor as “a program that is intended to help children with adverse childhood experience and prevent and help cure Nature Deficit Disorder. The purpose of CAMP is to help break the cycle of violence and promote inner peace through nature. Our goal is that through this experience these underprivileged kids will earn that they can choose to be happy, and that they will be able to take a sense of well-being and leadership home with them.” This summer camp program targets girls ages 10-13, who would benefit from a three day nature camp due to adverse childhood experience, nature deficit disorder, tough times, or a need for structure or support.

In both the summers of 2013 and 2014, the summer camp spanned three days and two nights. The camp was conducted at the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies remote Peterson Bay Field Station. In the three days the youth participants and youth leaders spent at the field station activities included team building exercises, crafts, tide pooling, forest exploration, evening campfires, meditation practices, service projects, and cooking classes. The youth leaders were the primary camp counselors with CACS staff providing adult supervision,

emergency care, and guidance. In the three days at the field station, the youth and youth leaders “unplugged,” where electronics other than cameras were not allowed at camp along with no outside communication except in emergency situations. The youth were immersed in the outdoors and communal living, each girl was responsible for her own personal care, and communal chores and activities. The camp’s three days provided structure, support, encouragement, and consistency to the youth, something they may not experience at home.

Target Youth & Selection Process

This summer camp targets girls between the ages of 10 and 13 who have experienced or show signs of nature deficit disorder, or “tough times”. In order not to stigmatize the camp or the girls participating, youth that would not otherwise have a chance to attend a summer camp or would generally benefit from positive peer interactions and a supportive environment were also targeted.

The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies staff worked closely with community outreach organizations which provide services for the target youth and their guardians. These other organizations and individuals who helped to recruit camp participants included Haven House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Rec Room, teachers in the local schools, Girl Scouts, and individual guardians. All youth girls that applied to attend CAMP in 2014 were accepted and participated. There were a total of eight youth participants in CAMP in August of 2014.

Youth Leader and CACS Staff Training

This summer camp’s focus is two-fold. Not only does the camp target youth participants suffering from adverse childhood experiences and those that would benefit from a nature-based camp, but also the development of leadership in older youth leaders. For the 2014 camp, two high school girls were selected for participation in CAMP as youth leaders. These two high school students have both shown interest in teaching and developing leadership skills through their prior work with Girl Scouts and the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies. These two youth leaders attended a week long training and planning session at the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies with CACS and Haven House staff to prepare for the three day camp. These youth leaders and CACS staff participated in trainings on adverse childhood experiences, discussing and reporting abuse, conflict mediation, camp counselor skills, and team building activities. The youth leaders also planned the activities, itinerary, and menu for the three day camp with guidance from CACS staff. The youth leaders did the shopping and packing for camp, with supervision from CACS staff. The youth leaders also conducted role-play practice for conflict resolution, team building activities, and leading other camp activities with CACS staff supervision and feedback.

2014 C.A.M.P. Overview

In 2014, CAMP was conducted August 10 -12 at the Peterson Bay Field Station. The participants in CAMP included eight campers, girls between the ages of 10 and 13, two high school youth leaders, and one adult CACS staff. In the three days camp was conducted at the

field station, the youth leaders were the primary camp counselors. These two youth leaders lead most activities, crafts, team building exercises, and cooking classes (except tide-pooling, forest hikes, and jamming (the making of blueberry jam), which were done by CACS staff). The activities conducted at camp included crafts, skits, team building activities, games, free time, meditation, canoeing, swimming, hiking, tide pooling, cooking classes, cleaning, and a service project (helping to build a new outhouse). All of the girls participated in these activities.

Impacts on Youth Participants

Studies have shown that youth with adverse childhood experiences or suffer from nature deficit disorder greatly benefit from removal from their daily environment, and emersion in "wilderness therapy" for even a short period of time. "Wilderness therapy" or "nature cure," allow youth to experience nature and the outdoors in a supportive, safe, and structured manner. This camp offers youth the experience of the outdoors, positive interactions with peers, presents great role models in youth leaders, and a supportive environment. While this does not "fix" the youth participants, it fosters positive friendships, healthy relationships with peers and people of authority. It also teaches the girls skills in anger management, meditation, and reflection. Many of the girls participated continue to be friends. The long term benefit of CAMP includes breaking the cycle of violence and developing a respect for nature as well as training future leaders creating a peaceful planet

Impacts on Youth Leaders

The camp provided the two youth leaders with a first experience in a leadership role. They developed skills in time management, group management, anger management, storytelling, teaching, leading my example, and personal reflection. These youth leaders learn how to prepare and conduct a project from start to finish. They learn to cooperate with each other and the youth campers, to interact on different levels and in different ways to complement different interests and personalities of the campers. The youth leaders also learned to deal with difficult and uncomfortable situations.

Promotional Material, Newspaper Articles, Etc.

In October of 2014, the CACS staff, Loretta Brown, and youth leader, Colleen McDougal, presented to the Homer Downtown Rotary Club. This presentation was an overview of the 2014 CAMP and Colleen's experience as a youth leader.

2014 CAMP Budget

C.A.M.P. received two grants to help offset the cost of running the program, one from Peace Forum Hawaii, Inc. (\$1,000) and one from the Home Downtown Rotary & Homer Foundation (\$1,000). These grants provided scholarships to the girls who were attending so that they could attend for free. Financial hardship is a major barrier to youth participation in camps and activities that have a fee, especially ones that require transportation to remote locations. Eight campers and 2 teen leaders were funded at \$200 per person for a total of

\$2000. Scholarship funds helped cover the cost of water transportation (\$60/person), food (\$45/person), supplies (\$45/person) and lodging (\$50/person). Supplies that were purchased included journals, flashlight keychains, canning jars and lids, beads and yarn and other craft related supplies for team building activities and reflection time. All cost associated with CACS staff including transportation, food, lodging and instruction/staff compensation was donated by CACS. All training time (1 week total) provided by professionals in the Homer community was donated as well.

Thank you for your support!



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