

Summer camp continues lessons learned at school



By Jeff Troth, Medical Department Activity Public Affairs

From time to time we all need a little help. That was one lesson 20 children learned during Fort Carson's School Behavioral Health Summer Camp.

The two-week camp, for students from Fort Carson's elementary and middle schools, was designed with the children's needs in mind.

"Every activity we do at the camp is therapeutic in some way," said Jacqueline Delano, PhD, the deputy chief for the School Behavioral Health program. "It may look like the kids are just having fun, but there is actually thought behind each activity."

The camp's art therapy classes included a Me Scrapbook Collage and an Interactive Art and Cool Science day to show the children that things aren't always what they seem. To keep them moving there was recreational therapy with soccer to teach teamwork, and judo for impulse control. The camp concluded with equine therapy at Turkey Creek to help with showing compassion.

"Every day is a different theme," said Delano. "We do a lot of social skills building, a lot of teamwork and team building. We have one day of getting to know people and making friends."

For one boy camper, the social part of the camp was his favorite part.

"I got to hang around with kids I don't know and become friends, good friends with them," he said.

At the end of the first week, the campers went rock climbing at the Fort Carson Outdoor Recreation Complex. The theme for the day was Facing Challenges, Perseverance and Working as a Team. After a safety brief by the outdoor recreation staff, the campers conducted warm up games, which stressed encouraging each other and teamwork before they ascended the complex's 40-foot walls.

The boy said he wasn't nervous about climbing the tall walls. For him it was fun and he made it to the top of three of the four runs, but on the fourth run the hand holds were spaced a little out of his reach.

A girl camper, began her first climb slowly, unsure of what she was doing. But encouragement from her fellow campers and the staff helped her make it to the top of the 40-foot wall, not once, but twice. She would have made it to the top on her third run, but the holds at the top of that run were also spaced a bit too far apart for her.

“Her second climb was excellent, I was impressed she made it the whole way up,” said the girl’s mom. “She was a little nervous, but she made it. She even asked for help when she needed help, which is a big step for her as well.”

And, those steps are why the camp was started four years ago. During the school year the campers, who range in age from 6-13, attend school on post and see behavioral health advisors.

“Every child that comes into our program has some kind of diagnosis,” said Delano. “It might be an adjustment or anxiety disorder or they might be bi-polar, we even have a couple kids with autism.”

By being embedded at the school, the advisors are able to not only work with the children and parents, but also the teachers, who see the children all week long. The summer camp was started after the advisors noticed an increased number of missed appointments during the summer, and that some children had regressed in their treatments when the new school year began.

“So we wanted to have more continuity of care so the children won’t lose what they were working on during the school year,” said Delano. “We also get to see different things from them when they are in a group setting compared to when they are in individual sessions.

“For those with fear and anxiety issues, the rock climbing is a great experience and gives them a chance to work on those issues. If we are working on anger management skills during the school year, the camp allows us an opportunity to coach them in using those anger management skills.”

“It is a fantastic camp and does great things for the kids,” the girl’s mom the girl’s mom said. “I am so happy to have something for her to do where she has an outlet and can build on her social skills over the summer.”

For more information on the School Behavioral Health program, call the Evans Army Community Hospital’s Child and Family Assistance Center at 526-0771 or 503-7070.



During the post's School Behavioral Health Summer Camp, campers climb the 40-foot wall at the Fort Carson Outdoor Recreation Complex. (Photo by Jeff Troth)