

Computer Camp Builds Confidence, Skills

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Dauphin Co. Correspondent
NEWVILLE (Cumberland Co.) — It started with a "Willow In The Wind" and ended with a pizza party. Fourteen youth, ranging in age from 12 to 16 years, recently completed a week-long 4-H computer camp at Big Spring Middle School, in Newville. In between were numerous activities and an opportunity to get to use computers and publish a newsletter.

A computer sales representative from Newville, Vic St. Vincent, contacted Anthony Betonte, Cumberland County 4-H agent, concerning the beginnings of a 4-H computer club. From that, one thing led to another. Anthony was able to secure a grant to purchase computer programs for use with 4-H'ers. The next obstacle was to attract the interested youth and available computers. This led Anthony to Mr. Gow, the principal at Big Spring Middle School, who offered support for the 4-H computer program to be held at the middle school during summer school. In this way, the computers would be available as well as

space. In addition to Gow's support, Anthony enlisted the support of Anne Fulker, counselor at the middle school, and Mary Laeger-Hagemeister, extension home economist with responsibilities in Dauphin and Cumberland counties. Another key player was Bob McClure who agreed to be the instructor for the computer portion of the camp. Pooling all of these resources, Anthony organized a week of "4-H Computer Camp" for the human computer as well as the technical computer.

The 14 youth who participated were recruited through the use of posters in the school and on the school buses, 4-H newsletters, and the local newspaper. Mrs. Fulker was very instrumental in accomplishing this important task since she knows the students more intimately than any one else on the planning committee.

Since the theme for the week was computers, the mastery of the technical computer was a key factor in the goals for the week. However, part of the goals were also to build the self-esteem of the individuals as well as their ability to

learn to work as a team. Therefore, for half of the camp, Mary worked with them on a variety of self-esteem building activities and team strengthening activities. "It is important for the kids to feel good about themselves in order to achieve their goals so one of the goals for this week was to get the kids to be able to identify some of their strengths," said Mary. Anthony commented that "While knowing how to use computers can get them jobs, they also have to know how to work with others and try to solve problems. That's why I asked Mary to do team building activities with them."

By the end of the week the 4-H'ers had compiled a newsletter to share with their parents at "Show-off Night" consisting of articles each one had written. The newsletter also gave the group an opportunity to learn to work together. Groups were assigned various activities such as editing, artwork, and making certificates of completion, all means of helping to build a team and individuals within the team.

Completing a week of hard work and creativity the group

journeyed to the Electronic Data System in Camp Hill to see first hand a large computer system at work. It was a real highlight for everyone. Probably the favorite part of the day for the kids though was the pizza party following the tour.

When asked what the future plans are for this particular 4-H

project, Betonte explains that he is planning to meet with the School Age Child Care (SACC) program and the teachers at the school to see how it can be implemented during the school year. One thought is to target younger children and let those who completed this summer session be peer teachers.



"Fit Kids" class taught the participants the importance of taking care of the human computer.

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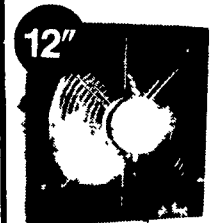
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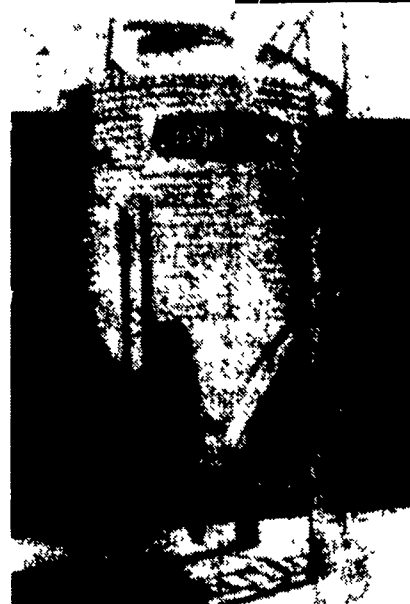
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