

Facts & fun: Students mentored hundreds at GCSU's Kids' University camp

This summer, more than 400 youngsters got to be explorers, scavengers, actors and scientists during nine weeks of fun at Georgia College & State University's Kids' University camps.

They learned a little of just about everything—from the great outdoors and cultures around the world to hometown heroes and creepy crawlies.

It was fun for campers and for the college students who mentored them.

"It's really a great opportunity and a great experience to spend time with children and to see their personalities shine, to see their growth," said junior Stelios Spirou of Milledgeville.

A political science major, Spirou brought a little of his own expertise to camp this summer. He taught about the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights and freedom. He enjoyed guiding tomorrow's leaders.

"The kids are all very interesting, and they're excited to learn and have fun," Spirou said. "This will totally help me in my future. Being a counselor will help me understand kids in general, and it gives me a small view of the educational system in our country."

During bug week, a classroom at West Campus was filled with microscopes and mounds of arts-n-crafts material—glitter, glue, scissors, paints, pipe cleaners, markers, crayons. There were books about bugs, glass vials of dead bugs and tubs of dirty, rotten logs filled with—you guessed it—more bugs.

Screams of "Yuck," "Ew" or "Wow" filled the air as campers used tweezers and fingers to pull giant beetles and larvae from rotten logs. One group even found a small scorpion that was safely collected by counselors and put on display for all to see.

They went on hikes to explore bugs and nature. Campers learned about the lifecycle of bugs, drew bugs, painted bugs and built bugs. Each day included time in the pool, a reading period, games and special activities. Each week ended with a celebration, so campers could show off what they learned to their parents.

"Kids' U counselors offer the youth of Baldwin County creative, fun and exploratory learning opportunities in a welcoming camp environment," said Nancy Finney, director of Kids' U and program coordinator for the department of Continuing and Professional Education, which is part of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SoCPS).

"Kids' U also provides counselors an opportunity to apply hands-on learning and leadership skills," she said. "Working at Kids' University gives Georgia College students a chance to learn about their strengths and become more self-aware as they prepare to graduate. Leading a summer camp and group of kids helps them lead meetings down the road and, for our future teachers, it helps them acquire the skills they'll need before joining the workforce."

Alumna Ani Posey, '18, got her degree in special education at Georgia College. She's been teaching at Midway Hills Primary and other Georgia public schools the past few years. This summer, she was assistant director of Kids' U and prepared curriculum for campers. She also guided Georgia College students as counselors.

"I love how this summer we've really gotten to integrate some different themes into our curriculum every day," Posey said. "We have electives where counselors get to collaborate and work with an activity

of their own special interest."

"Bringing in outdoor education and project-based learning add so much value to everything we do," she said. "Some kids, despite nature being all around us, haven't had that opportunity to sit and stare at an ant or watch a spider build its web. We give kids and counselors time to grapple with things."

Diondra Franklin of Carrollton, Georgia got her undergraduate degree in Creative Writing at Georgia College in 2021. Now, she's working on her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT).

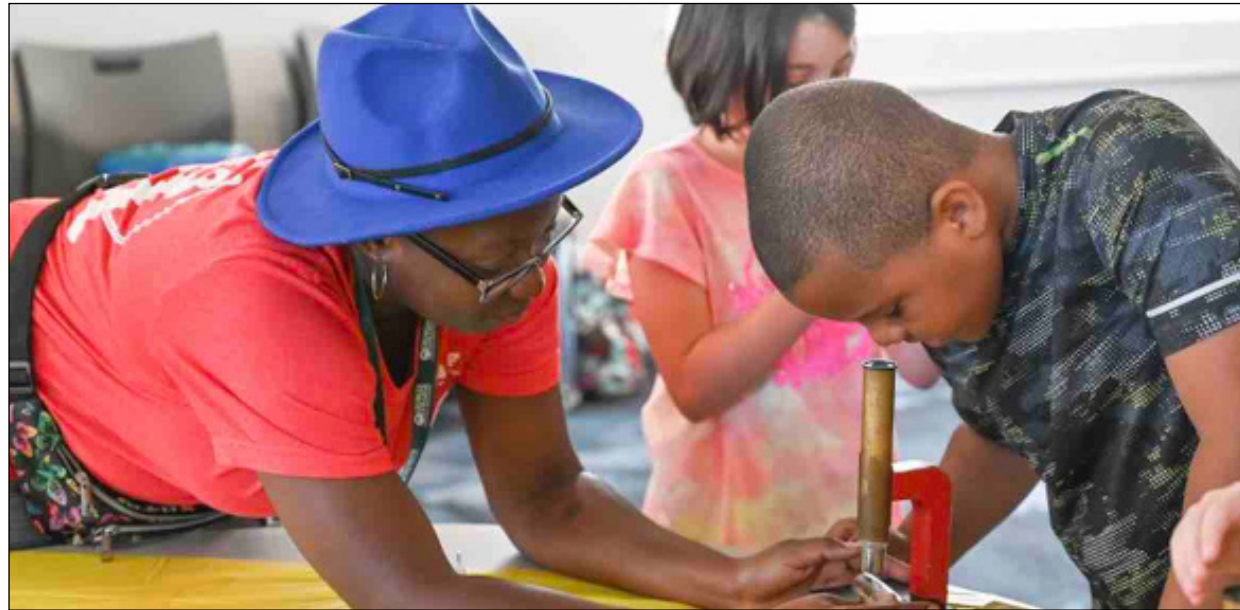
Her duties are to make sure kids are engaged with the outdoors and each other. It's a perfect way for Franklin to practice her teaching skills, while also engaging youth in conversations about college.

"If I can have my kids walk away from here and know that there's something more out there," she said, "then I feel like I've done my job."

"I'll tell anyone, if you're unsure you want to be in the teaching field," she said, "then work at a summer camp."



Diondra Franklin and Ani Posey lead campers in opening songs and jokes.



New Georgia College Nursing Scholars Program funds aspiring nurses

With their first five scholars in tow, the Georgia College & State University (GCSU) College of Health Science School of Nursing (SON) kicked off its Lettie Page Whitehead Nursing Scholars Program.

Funded by the Lettie Page Whitehead Foundation, the scholarship program helps "deserving female students with financial need."

"The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the shortage of nurses in our state and nationwide," said Dr. Sheri Novello, dean of COHS and coordinator for the program.

"We're targeting students from middle and central Georgia for our region's healthcare needs," she said. "We want to train the next generation of nurses, and we don't want financial need to be a barrier to excellent students."

The four-year, cohort-based program provides full scholarship to qualified incoming nursing students. Funding pays for tuition, fees, housing, meals, textbooks, nursing program fees and one healthcare-related study abroad.



New Lettie Page Whitehead Nursing Scholar's Program helps low-income students reach their dreams of becoming nurses.

Five students were selected for this year's award. They were the first five applicants who declared nursing as their major, while meeting the standard for "financially needy" based on students' federal applications for financial aid.

About 20 more are expected within the next four years.

As pre-nursing majors, scholarship recipients will be housed together as a cohort and groomed to enter the university's competitive Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. They are guaranteed entrance if they remain qualified.

"This scholarship program will allow us to continue to recruit the most qualified students into our stellar nursing program," said Josie Doss, interim director of SON. "It is an opportunity to grow the number of well-qualified nurses in Central Georgia by providing opportunities to those who may otherwise have had financial restrictions."

Hannah Pelt of Macon, Georgia, is part of the first pre-nursing cohort. She said the scholarship changed her life.

"When I get that degree in my hand, and I'm able to help people," she said, "it'll all be worth it."

Did you know?

Dr. Ernie Kaniñing, assistant professor of public health, has received a \$426,025 grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH) to research prostate cancer in African men.

The NIH is the nation's medical research agency and the gold standard of grant agencies for public health professionals.

"There are three known risk factors for prostate cancer: aging, prior family or hereditary factors and African ancestry," Kaniñing said. "My main motivation is to reduce the disparities—the differences—if not end them, for this population."

"I'm working with populations that are underserved," he said, "because that's where I believe we can make the greatest impact—and ultimately improve the health of the overall U.S. population."

The grant money will be used to conduct interviews across Georgia, Florida and Minnesota. It will also cover transcription and analysis and surveys.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/events

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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5 to 6 p.m. - The Begemann-Gordon Lecture Series "Sometimes a private matter needs public support." Reproductive Justice in Comparative Context: Ireland/US A Special Talk with Beth Sundstrom in Peabody Auditorium.

7:30 p.m. - The Georgia College & State University Saxophone Studio presents an evening of solo and chamber works at 7:30 p.m. in Max Noah Recital Hall.

10 to 11 a.m. - Dr. Beth Sundstrom kicks off a series of discussions with "Collaborate. Innovate. Advocate. The Womans' Health Research Team as a Model for Engaged Pedagogy in Undergraduate Research" at Ina Dillard Russel Library.