

Camp emphasizes service learning, self-esteem

Twelve Winburn Middle School students chose helping out over hanging out for a month this summer while participating in the school's "F.L.Y. Girls Leadership Academy," which focuses on service learning.

"I'm learning so much about myself and others," said first year F.L.Y. Girl Keyora Dixon. "I thought (the Academy) would be a good opportunity to help everyone and help build my self-esteem."

Seventh-grader Samantha Davis signed up for a different reason: "I thought it would be a good opportunity to make new friends," she said.

During the four week program, sixth, seventh and eighth grade participants spent their time exercising, making arts and crafts, and writing in their journals. They also earned their babysitting certification, made healthy food boxes for preschoolers and planned a luncheon for senior women all while learning to work together. The group even managed to squeeze in time for an overnight camping trip to the Kentucky Horse Park – a first for many of the students.

"It's important that women give back to other women," said camp director and Winburn Family Resource Center Coordinator TC Johnson. "This program gives them something to do in the summer and teaches them important social skills while building character."

Johnson's goal is to teach students lessons that will propel them beyond their middle school years. The "F.L.Y. Girls" program is a year-long offering at Winburn, which provides guest speakers and leadership opportunities for participants. The summer camp component is the most intense.

At the end of the summer program, the girls shared the insights they gained.

"I've learned that girls shouldn't worry about the small things," said Keyora.