Teaching the Next Generation

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Fifty boy scouts eagerly waited to receive a notebook on November 4th, 2012. With these notebooks, the Webelos Boy Scouts could record observations from their day at the college, where they would learn about science, and work to earn another badge that they could pin to their vests. Bright and early on a Saturday morning, we began our 4th Webelos College Day with Boy Scout dens in our area.

The 4th Webelos College Day was hosted by Alpha Phi Omega (APO), a co-ed community service fraternity that both of us have been involved in since our sophomore year. During our first semester with the fraternity, we helped start the tradition of working with the Boy Scouts twice a year to teach them different fields of science, such as geology, general chemistry, and physics. Many of our fraternity members are also science majors, which is also why we enjoy these educational service events.

“One of the best feelings from this day was to teach these kids different skills and knowing that they got something out of it,” said Sarah Navarro, biology major and Public Relations Chair of APO, when asked about her favorite part of Webelos College Day.

This year at the College Day, APO taught the Boy Scouts about ecology so they could earn their naturalist badge. The event included a workshop about different methods of art for them to earn their artist badge. Over 50 Boy Scouts came to the event to earn their pins with over twenty-five volunteers from APO, as well as members from the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity. The boys participated in activities such as learning how to use binoculars, identifying birdcalls from Illinois-native birds, and identifying poisonous animals and plants that can be found in the greater Chicago area. At the end of the day, the boys were able to take home their projects as well as their Naturalist badge.

"Who can tell me what the scientific method is?"

On April 22nd, 2012 over 90 Girl Scouts sat together with Lake Forest College students at a similar College Day event to learn more about the scientific method. The girls attended the event so that they could earn a badge on how to be a naturalist, as well as a badge in science and technology. We had so much success with the Boy Scouts College Day, and we were excited to hopefully start a similar connection with the local Girl Scouts in the area. The day of the event just so happened to fall on National Earth Day, something both the Girl Scouts and the students of Lake Forest College had a strong connection to.

When we opened registration that morning, we were only expecting to have 45 Girl Scouts attend the event. We were never expecting so many girls to come at the last minute hoping to join us. Even though we knew that the day was about to get even more chaotic than we originally thought, we were excited at the thought of being able to reach out to so many girls at once. The girls ranged in age from kindergarten through sixth grade. We had workshops for the younger girls that featured sessions on the anatomy of plants and insects that are in the area. We brought the older girls to the chemistry lecture hall where we had interactive demonstrations to teach them about important chemical properties.

Not only are we both biology majors, but we also hold the positions of Vice-President of Service and President of APO. It has always been important to us to give back to the community, and what better way to do it than to share our passion with the minds of tomorrow. It has been such a great opportunity to work with the kids in our area as part of our service project. The best part is that we get to help them expand their knowledge of the sciences, and hopefully help foster some kind of interest in the field. As long as they have a fun time during these College Day events, we have accomplished our goal of connecting with them. College Day is a fantastic avenue for reminding kids how important the STEM field is, and just how exciting it can be!