



Central Alabama Marines-Council
A Registered 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation



The Situation Report: Semper Fi Summer Adventures

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An older teammate helps a younger teammate during the rocket construction phase at camp.

Week 3: Powered by Curiosity, Built with Teamwork

Week 3 of camp sparked imagination, ignited curiosity, and challenged campers to build, think, and continue developing a leadership mindset. From the first flip of a circuit switch to the final “Team Cup” challenge, our young campers embraced every moment with creativity and energy.

Through science,
experiments,

engineering projects, and business simulations, campers developed skills that will serve them well—beyond the summer. They were able to launch rockets, bake s’mores in solar ovens, craft bridges, and so many other STEM activities delivered by our partners in education—Shelby County 4-H and the Shelby County Alabama Extension.

As always, daily reading and math literacy sessions continued to reinforce

academic confidence, while outdoor sports rotations ensured campers remained active and engaged. It was a week filled with lightbulb moments, laughter, and teamwork—this is what summer camp is all about.



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Shelby County 4-H Activities

Circuits & Oobleck: The Flow of Energy & Fun

Campers kicked off the week with a hands-on journey into the world of electrical circuits and energy transfer. Using batteries, copper strips, and an LED light, they constructed simple circuits and explored the difference between open and closed systems. They even experimented with switches and conductors vs. insulators using their bodies which helped deepen their understanding of how electricity flows and powers our world.

Our 4-H partners shifted gears into something gooey and strange: Oobleck, which is a cornstarch-and-water creation that acts like a solid when you hit it and a liquid when you agitate it. As campers mixed, poked, and poured, they learned about non-Newtonian fluids, properties of matter, and how science can be both fun and fascinatingly weird.



Shelby County 4-H Activities

Rocket Science & NASA Missions

On Tuesday, campers spent the day reaching for the sky—literally! We began with an engaging lesson on space exploration and the role of NASA, learning about past and current missions, the science behind propulsion, and how gravity and force work together in rocketry. Campers even learned the basics of Newton's Laws of Motion through video presentations.

Then came the real excitement: building and launching their rockets. Using safe single-stage rocket engines and customized rocket designs, campers carefully constructed their crafts and fine-tuned them for height, flight stability, and recovery (with a parachute). The launch zone came alive with cheers as rockets soared into the sky—some flying more than 400 feet! Campers celebrated successful launches and supported their teammates with recovery operations.



Shelby County 4-H Activities

Bridge Building & Structural Engineering

Wednesday challenged campers to think like civil engineers, applying lessons in physics, design, and teamwork to the task of building bridges. After learning about different types of bridges (e.g., suspension, arch, truss, and beam) campers discussed the role of tension and compression in load-bearing structures. They also explored how bridges throughout history, from ancient Rome to modern skyscrapers, reflect advances in material science and engineering strategy.

With popsicle sticks, gumdrops, and creativity, each camper constructed a model bridge designed to withstand weight and meet specific length and strength criteria. Final testing took place and a camper from each team emerged!

Congratulations to our winning bridge builders!



Shelby County 4-H Activities

Solar Energy & UV Science

On Thursday, campers turned into junior environmental scientists as they explored the power of the sun. They began by learning about solar energy and how it can be harnessed through tools like solar panels, ovens, and UV sensors. Through interactive demonstrations and discussions, campers connected renewable energy concepts to real-world applications (e.g., cooking food, powering homes, and reducing our carbon footprint).

So, what was the highlight of the day? Designing and building functional solar ovens out of cardboard boxes, foil, black paper, and clear plastic wrap. After assembling their ovens, campers moved outside and waited patiently as the sun worked its magic. Within the hour, their s'mores were warm, gooey, and delicious.

Campers also conducted UV sensitivity experiments using color-changing beads, observing how light exposure affects different materials and how we can protect ourselves from harmful UV rays.



Shelby County 4-H Activities

Math & Business Day: Cookie Mining & Team Cup Event

Today, our young leaders addressed two exciting challenges that tested both their entrepreneurial instincts and team-building skills!

First up was the Cookie Miner Challenge, where campers took on the role of resource managers and business owners. Armed with a budget, tools, and a cookie (yes, the edible kind), they strategized to extract the most chocolate chips while keeping costs low and profits high. This fun activity taught real-world lessons about budgeting, cost analysis, decision-making, and working with employees (our younger campers).

Then came the Team Cup challenge, where communication and cooperation proved critical. Using only rubber bands and string, teams raced to stack Red Solo cups without touching them. It was a thrilling hands-on exercise in teamwork, patience, and creative problem-solving. There was so much laughter and celebration as towers grew (and sometimes toppled).

Collectively, these two challenges gave campers a dynamic experience in working as a team, thinking strategically, and leading with purpose—skills they'll carry long beyond the summer.



Literacy, Numbers & Movement

Literacy, Numbers & Movement: A Balanced Routine

Academic enrichment remained a cornerstone of camp this week. Campers continued their journey with structured reading and math literacy sustainment sessions designed to strengthen fluency, comprehension, number sense, and problem-solving. Our instructors did a great job keeping the tone fun and engaging with digital engagement platforms like Blooket and Jeopardy.

In between lessons, campers rotated through a variety of outdoor sports, including baseball, softball, and soccer. These physical activities offered not just exercise but also lessons in teamwork, sportsmanship, and perseverance. The balance of body and brain kept campers motivated and energized each day.



Camp Instructor Spotlight

Instructor Spotlight: Guiding with Passion & Purpose

This week, we're highlighting two of our outstanding camp instructors: Ms. Diana Isom and Ms. Emma Thompson, who are both passionate about education and shaping young minds.

Ms. Isom brings experience as a substitute teacher, paraprofessional, caregiver, and daycare assistant. She's currently pursuing a degree in education at Athens State with plans to become a school administrator and eventually open a school focused on inclusive, individualized learning.

"Children are the future, and I love being part of their journey—helping them grow, learn, and have fun along the way."

Ms. Emma Thompson is an Elementary Education major at Samford University. She's tutored 1st–3rd graders in reading for Birmingham City Schools and is certified in First Aid/CPR/AED.

"I enjoy watching kids grow and knowing I'm part of their development."

Fun facts: Diana dreams of starting her own school, and Emma is a big Formula One fan.

These two future educators have brought kindness, compassion, and positive energy to our summer camp. We're very lucky to have them onboard!



Final Thoughts

Wrapping Up Week 3, with a Sneak Peek at Week 4!

Our final week promises to be a powerful finish to an already unforgettable summer! We are thrilled to welcome back our partners from Shelby County 4-H and the Shelby County Alabama Extension, who will guide campers through the following hands-on enrichment activities in our final week:

- Plant & Animal Science
- Soil Composition
- Agriculture & Sustainability

We remain grateful to our partners and sponsors for making this camp possible for our military, veteran, and local families located in Shelby, Jefferson, and Tuscaloosa Counties.

We're excited to kick off the final week of our camp programming!

