

Compassionate Touch teaches county students manners, respect and healing ailments

• Participants also learn to use gentle hands for healing of various ailments



Ivy Herron photo

Summer Day camper Zachary Ellis, 9, cuts out a paper handprint to place on a poster at the YMCA Summer Day Camp about being kind towards others. The poster will be displayed during the camp and each time a child performs a compassionate act toward someone, they will be able to place their hand print on the poster.

By IVY HERRON
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When a child learns that a gentle touch can help a person to heal, it has the potential to change their outlook about personal relationships.

"Learning about Compassionate Touch has a great impact on their lives," said Pam Fischer, the YMCA Summer Camp director. "We're stressing core values this year at camp, like the impact of honesty, respect, caring and responsibility in these kids' lives. Compassionate Touch is a

big part of our program." Fischer, who is also a teacher at Jackson Township Elementary School, has seen the effects of the program.

"It changes the way children think and react to others," she said.

Sandy Stearley of Center Point, teaches the fundamentals of Compassionate Touch each Wednesday at Forest Park Elementary to children of all ages at YMCA Summer Day Camp. She also taught the program in Fischer's classroom.

"Children really respond to the ideas behind Compassionate Touch," she said.

Compassionate Touch, or CranioSacral Therapy (CST), is a gentle, hands-on method used by osteopathic physicians and therapists for evaluating and enhancing the function of the membranes and cerebrospinal fluid surrounding and protecting the brain and spinal cord.

Using a soft touch, generally no greater than the weight of a nickel, practitioners release restrictions in the craniosacral system to treat patients with Migraine headaches, Autism, Scoliosis, learning disabilities, chronic fatigue, emotional difficulties, stress and tension-related problems among many other ailments.

The therapy (pioneered and developed by osteopathic physician John E. Upledger, a clinical researcher and Professor of Biomechanics at Michigan State University) might sound like an odd thing to teach children, but Stearley says it works.

"Repetition is the key to learning for children, the longer amount of time I have to work with them the more the ideas sink in," Stearley said.

"They learn being nice and kind to each other is a good thing they can take pride in. I like hearing the students say, 'Thank you,' to see the new respect and manners they show to people as the program goes along."

To learn more about Compassionate Touch contact Sandy Stearley, of Sandy's Healing Hands, at 812-835-2546. #07068

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