

## YOUTH CORNER

### Summer Camps in UNT

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At the University of North Texas (UNT), there is a program called Elm Fork Education Center and they have summer camps. There are a lot of different summer camps to choose from, and all of them have something related to the environment and science. It also has a lot of different fun activities and not just a boring camp to teach people about protecting the environment all day.

For example, there is a camp where we got to learn about the different properties of water and how to test for them in lakes, rivers, and streams. There are 2 teachers, both are volunteers, they taught us about pollution in the water, and how scientists are trying to solve that. This is related to the environment because we got to learn how bad the pollution problem is in the waters and how we can help stop that.



We also learned about how to measure different properties in the water, for example, the most complicated one was measuring the oxygen levels inside the

water. If the oxygen levels are high, then it is good for the organisms living inside the water; if it is too low, then it is bad because the organisms may die due to the lack of oxygen.

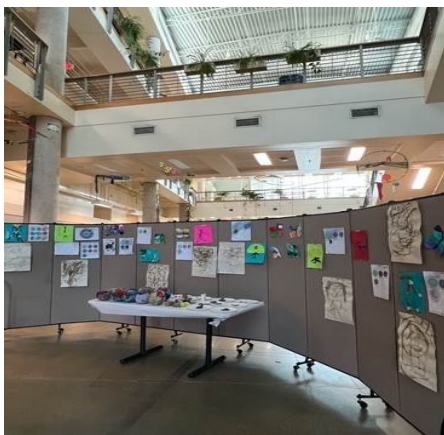
We used a lot of different chemicals to measure the oxygen levels and it has a lot of different steps so we can know how to determine if a body of water is suitable for water creatures. We also measured how many particles were in the water, so we grabbed a sample water bottle, filled it up with the water, and measured it with a tool that showed the temperature, electric currents, etc.

We also measure the wind speed and canopy cover for more information. We went out to measure for 3 days, one was at Ray Robert Lake which had a river there, we measured the things in the water and then we caught fish. Another time was at Clear Creek, where we did the same thing, but I fell into the creek though, I got soaked, lost my socks, and got my shoes covered with mud. The last time we went out was when we had fun kayaking, it was my first time kayaking and I found it very tiring because you had to paddle hard to get the kayak going. All in all, I think it was really fun because we didn't do that much boring work, most of the time we just had fun and it also taught us about pollution, and it teaches us to know the water environment's properties and that could let

us know if there is anything unusual going on inside the water.

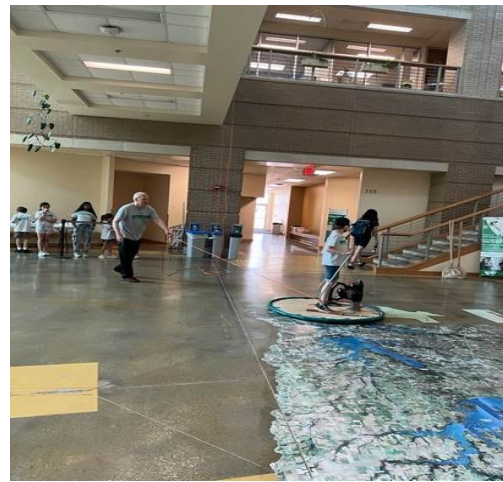
Another example is that one of the camp's themes is the elements of art. We learned how to make paper from recycled materials, and it can help recycle used paper to make new paper and then you can paint on it, it is very cool. It also can help reduce paper waste.

We also learned how to make different art materials like pastels, and we used a technique called wood-burning. The only materials we needed were a wood board, a magnifying glass, and the sun. We first use the magnifying glass to point it at the sun and then make it so that it is at the right angle, and then we must point it at the wood board, and then it should catch on fire and then it will make a scorch mark and you can use those markings to make a drawing.



I think the camp is very fun and I think it has a lot to do with the science and the environment. I got a chance to talk to the center director Brian and learned a lot of information from the talk. Brian told me that the camp first started in October 1998. At first, there was not a lot to choose from, and there were only 40 campers over 2 weeks. But then people started making suggestions about what camps they should do and as long it had science included in it,

they'd add it to the selection, and now there were more than 200 campers over 5 weeks.



There were a lot of people who were involved at the start of the camp, one of them was Brian, and the person who got the idea of starting this Elm Fork program was a biology professor in college, how he got the idea was that he noticed the students were less connected to the environment, most of the kids grew up barely going outside. He didn't like that, so he wanted to make kids more interested in science and wanted them to go outside more. So that was why he made the Elm Fork program. Brian also told me that the Elm Fork program is not just the summer camps, there is a homeschool lab, a program for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and a field trip program. Each year a lot of the volunteers are also students, and the students teach and look out for the kids, there were elder volunteers too, one of the oldest is over 100 years old!

