



Helping Hands

Patriots' Trail Council

Activities

Complete 7 activities, including the 3 "starred" ones.

1. In order to help others, girls must first know what strengths they have to offer. Sometimes the best way to figure out your capabilities is from others. Organize a group of peers (this could be your Girl Scout troop, a school club, a church group, or some of your friends) and complete the following awareness activities:
 - Express your traits through art. Draw pictures depicting the following things about yourself and share them with the group: something physical, an emotional area, an intellectual area, a personality trait, a like, and a dislike.
 - Gather the group in a circle and give each person a piece of paper with his or her name on it. Pass the papers clockwise while each peer writes a positive comment about the person whose name is at the top of the paper. Continue this exercise until the papers have returned to the original owners. Keep these "Feel Good" sheets in a convenient place for when your confidence is low.
2. * Understanding various disabilities is important because it allows you to know the needs of each individual. Complete extensive research on the following diseases and disorders (include causes and characteristics): Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Scoliosis, Epilepsy/Seizure Disorders, Legal Blindness, Down's Syndrome, Hydrocephalus, Microcephalus, Learning Disabilities, Behavior Disorders, Deafness, and Speech Problems. Keep in mind that these are not all of the disabilities which

- can afflict people. More research may be needed as you continue your project.
3. Although people with special needs are not fragile, you must know the proper techniques for helping them. Talk to a doctor, physical therapist, or other professional who works with the handicapped on a day-to-day basis and learn how to assist in the following activities:
 - Pushing a wheelchair
 - Putting on various types of supportive braces
 - Proper techniques for lifting someone out of a wheelchair onto a bed, chair, etc.
 - Feeding or aiding with personal hygiene (i.e., brushing teeth, washing face, etc.)
 4. Many individuals who are speech or hearing impaired use sign language to communicate. Learn some important signs used in simple communication (either by an instructor, video, or book). Talk one-on-one with a person who uses sign language to speak, or utilize your skills by translating easy phrases of a song or parts of a meeting at a public event.
 5. It is important for all public buildings to be handicapped accessible. Talk to the principal of your school to find out what adjustments have been made to accommodate people with disabilities. Are these facilities adequate? Are there any physically disabled people currently attending your school? Do they have any suggestions on what might be improved? Finally, draw up a plan for incorporating or improving handicapped accessible structure into your school.
 6. Select one of the following career-related fields in which you are most interested: Administration of Health Services, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Pediatrics, Physical Therapy, Prosthetic Devices, Research, Recreation, Social Work, Teaching, or Speech and Hearing. Interview an individual from this area of expertise and find out the type of work he or she does, the requirements, the benefits, and other important information.
 7. * To understand what physical trials people with disabilities must overcome, complete some role-playing activities with a small group. Blindfold one member and have a "helper" lead him or her through a course blocked with everyday obstacles. Using rags, tie up various limbs so that they are unable to be used in a normal fashion (i.e., tie the arms behind the back, a wrist to a leg, etc.) Lead the "disabled" person through common tasks such as: eating, writing, or playing a simple game. Afterwards, discuss what emotions you experienced while being both the person needing aid and the helper.

8. Many people learn through observation. Visit a special education class at a local school and watch how the teacher interacts with the students. Get involved with some of the activities that they do and work with the kids. Note especially what actions evoke certain responses. Each child is different, therefore you need to be aware of what may cause tears, laughter, or fear. Write down your experiences and save them for future reference.
9. Knowledge is the key to acceptance. Many people that have different needs are shunned by the public because they are not understood. Arrange for a discussion meeting with both disabled and non-disabled members of your community. Make sure to include such topics as: personal experiences, integration, awareness, and acceptance.
- 10.* Volunteer to work one-on-one with a disabled person(s) in your community for at least eight hours. You can contact special education teachers, local families, nursing homes, or ask your Girl Scout council for troops with disabled members. Work on activities which they would enjoy and which are suited to their skill level. Observe the behavior and note the characteristics of the people with whom you are working.
11. Often, there are not many social activities geared toward people with special needs. Organize a day of games or crafts for the handicapped people in your community. Invite their friends and family but be aware of the varying capabilities which will be attending. Make sure that experienced people are present to help take care of the attendees.