

Letter: S. Tahoe rec camp keeps kids moving

To the community,

As part of the statewide celebration recognizing July as "Parks Make Life Better" month, recreation departments throughout the state created programs and campaigns to celebrate the benefits that recreation programs bring to the community. The city of South Lake Tahoe newly branded summer camp program, South Tahoe Adventure Recreation or STAR Camp, aligns directly with the promise of the campaign through the mission to provide an active, healthy and safe environment for youth to learn and play.

During the month of July STAR Camp youth participants were challenged to complete one fitness activity a day for 30 minutes in addition to regular STAR camp adventure activities. Camp leader Gina Locicero is credited with creating and implementing the fitness challenge. Gina created a display identifying each daily activity. Every child who completed the activity each day had his or her name posted on the display.

Scheduled fitness activities included bike riding, jumping jacks, running, pushups and more. Not to worry if a child missed a day of activities; participants were encouraged to participate in the fitness activities while on vacation or outside of a scheduled camp day by having a parent sign off on the list of activities accomplished.

The motivation and inspiration for fitness spread like wildfire as children began to challenge their peers, parents, and camp leaders to "get fit".

Recognizing that fitness is more than just exercise, Gina incorporated nutrition goals each day. Children learned about healthy snacks and participated in choosing their own snacks

according to nutritional values that benefit lifelong health. One parent shared that her daughter asked her to “buy more fruit at home because she learned that it is a healthier choice”.

The creative approach to making exercise and nutrition fun through the 30-day fitness challenge not only had lasting impacts on young lives but also earned the STAR Camp a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award.

At the conclusion of the challenge STAR Camp leaders hosted a celebration inviting parents to participate in a fitness routine and witness their child receiving their certificate of completion, a T-shirt and individual Presidential Active Lifestyle Award.

Lauren Thomaselli, South Lake Tahoe recreation manager