CampUs program gives students trial run for college life

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To prepare one another for high school, incoming freshmen at CampUs Las Vegas made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

It might sound strange, but the sandwiches symbolized the three learning styles - auditory, visual and tactile - that the students had to demonstrate.

The first group explained to the class the steps of making the sandwich. The second had members of the class participate in the sandwich making. The last group showed the class how it is done.

It was one of the lighter activities that happened during the second annual six-day program meant to prepare students for high school and college. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, hosted the event for the second year July 9-14.

Students did plenty of heavy learning, too, filling out mock college applications, writing personal essays, learning about graduation requirements and how to apply for financial aid and hearing from guest speakers at three evening career panels. They also attended the U.S. Olympic men's basketball team's exhibition game against the Dominican Republic on July 12.

And even though they will not be applying to college for at least three years, they received an introduction to campus life. The stayed in dorms, ate in the cafeteria and spent hours a day at the recreation center. More than 30 high school and college mentors were with the kids at all times to provide encouragement and help with any of the course work.

"The reason we focus on eighth and ninth grades is because, oftentimes, students make the choice to drop out during their first or second year of high school," said Ranna Daud, associate director of the After-School All-Stars Las Vegas. "What happens in their first year of high school often determines the outcome for them."

Daud and others worked with each middle school's administrators to select the 70
students for CampUs, which had 50 students last year. Students came from Bridger, Brown, Cashman, Faiss, Garside, Smith and Orr middle schools. Many of the students already were in ASASLV's We R Ready high school preparation program.

The After-School All-Stars Las Vegas serves more than 6,000 at-risk youths in 15 elementary and middle schools in the valley by providing after-school academic and recreational programs. After-School All Stars is in 12 communities nationwide.

Hannah Geberyesus, who is leaving Orr Middle School, 1562 E. Katie Ave., to attend Valley High School, 2839 S. Burnham Ave., next month, said she is excited to take government, social studies and history classes. She hopes to go into politics after college, too.

"I feel more prepared (for high school)," Hannah said. "I understand what's coming, the criteria. ... I'm nervous, but I feel more prepared than I was."

Hannah also is an athlete and plans to play multiple sports in high school, including volleyball and basketball. She was excited to learn about the bountiful college scholarship opportunities available to females.

Jessi Escobar, 14, left Bridger Middle School, 2505 N. Bruce St. in North Las Vegas, and plans to attend Canyon Springs High School, 350 E. Alexander Road. He said his favorite activity of the week was swimming in the recreation center.

He did, however, leave with more than water between his ears.

"Every 26 seconds a person in high school drops out," Jessi said. "That's what they taught me at this camp. I don't want to be one of those 26 seconds."

For more information, visit asaslv.org.

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