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News Release

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Forest Service fosters stewardship through youth conservation education

Williams, Ariz., July 9, 2018—For Immediate Release. In late June, Kaibab National Forest employees spent time educating young campers at the Pine Combs 4-H Camp near Williams in order to help create future public land stewards. The 34 campers, ranging in age from 9 to 13, eagerly participated as specialists showcased natural and cultural resources from across the Kaibab National Forest.

“The goal of 4-H is to develop citizenship, leadership, responsibility and life skills of youth through experiential learning programs and positive youth development,” said Misti Todd, youth development program coordinator for Pinal County 4-H. “Our slogan is ‘learn by doing’ and having the representatives from the Forest Service come and interact with our kids helps to not only broaden their horizons, but allows them to learn things while they are in the situation.”

Over two days, the 4-H campers and counselors were treated to a series of interactive programs and activities presented by Kaibab National Forest specialists. On the first day, fire prevention specialists provided information on fire safety and protecting public lands through **Leave No Trace** outdoor ethics. Kids also learned how to extinguish a fake campfire and participated in an exercise designed to highlight the importance of forest restoration treatments. Even Smokey Bear made an appearance, reminding campers, “Only you can prevent wildfires.”

The second day brought a rotation of activities, with four separate stations highlighting Kaibab National Forest resources. At one station, campers learned about forest restoration and tree measurement tools with a forester from the Williams Ranger District. Under the guidance of an archaeologist, kids were given the chance to replicate 3,000-year-old willow branch figurines using pipe cleaner. Soon, the campers were excitedly trotting their colorful, deer-like miniatures around the table, giggling as they playfully sparred with each other.

“It is crucial that we pass on messages of conservation to youth so that when they visit the forest, they do so with respect for public lands,” said Neil Weintraub, an archaeologist with the Kaibab National Forest. “For archaeology, this is critical. Artifacts and cultural sites are fragile and irreplaceable traces of history, so conserving them on the landscape is critical to be able to reconstruct the past.”

Additional programs included outdoor safety and orienteering. During the outdoor safety session, campers learned the importance of being prepared and packing the correct equipment. As part of the orienteering lesson, the kids were taught to use a map and compass. Forest Service specialists even brought along

aerial maps of the camp, giving the kids a birds-eye view of everything from the outhouses to the dining hall.

“For many of the 4-H campers, this was one of their first experiences with a National Forest and meeting Forest Service employees. I think they got to see another side of Arizona and were interested in the skills presented by our employees,” said Mark Christiano, GIS coordinator for the Kaibab National Forest. “The best way to protect and conserve our public lands is through creating good stewards of the forest. This all starts with our youth, helping them to make that connection to the outdoors. We plant the seeds now to grow strong stewards of the future.”

For pictures of Kaibab National Forest’s involvement in the Pine Combs 4-H Camp, please visit the Flickr album at [bit.ly/4HKidsCamp2018](https://www.flickr.com/photos/kaibabnfs/14844444444/).

For more information about the Kaibab National Forest, reference the following sources:

- Website: www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab
- Twitter: [www.twitter.com/KaibabNF](https://twitter.com/KaibabNF)
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/KaibabNF

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Kaibab National Forest employees team with Smokey Bear to foster youth engagement in public land stewardship. Credit Kaibab National Forest.