

* * * VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS * * *

>> Submitted by Rosie, mailto:rosie_0801@yahoo.com

You know that phase kids go through, when they around 7 or 8? That phase where everything must be fair? I don't mean the whining "It's not faaaiiiirrr" in regards to lack of junk food etc. I mean that period where their minds develop a deep sense of justice, and are unable to comprehend anything that won't fit into it. My girls were in that phase, and persisted in hollering at "Keesha" for not "staying in the lines" at poison ball (ie dodge ball in the US). "Keesha" couldn't see anything clearly, if more than about 5cm from her face. The girls were not being nasty, they just had nowhere to file the fact that "Keesha" couldn't see the lines, no matter how many "little chats" we had about it. The solution?

I invited a blind teenager along. She brought her Braille typewriter to show the girls, a kids book translated into Braille, and a few other bibs and bobs. Her coin holder, and 'thing to put over the side of a cup so you don't overflow.' The girls were most interested and asked lots of questions. When they began to get a bit fidgety, I suggested some games. I gave each girl a blindfold, just some fabric scraps I had. They could see just enough to ensure they wouldn't crash into anyone/anything, but not enough to be able to see the lines in poison ball! It is really important to keep everyone on equal footings (leaders excluded.) Don't let any girl take off her blindfold until the activity is finished. If her eyes are itchy, or any other catastrophe, take her out of the activity are, to let her rub them, then the blindfold goes back on, and she can return to the activity. Nothing worse than knowing someone can see you, and you can't see them. After playing blindfolded poison ball, I was assured that they would "NEVER tell anyone off for going outside the lines EVER AGAIN!" Mission accomplished!

To provide an idea of what it would be like to be fully blind. I used an activity I remembered from my brownie days. I figured if it has stayed in my memory for 15 years, it will make an impression on them too. One leader should arrange enough table space in the middle of the room for the girls to fit around comfortably, and double over their blindfolds, so they can't see at all. Another leader should be in the kitchen preparing 2 plates with some margarine on them, and 2 with jam. (Depending on how many girls you have. Just make sure there is not nearly enough to go around.) When the girls are blindfolded, deliver the plates to the table. Give each girl a plate, slice of bread, and a butter knife. Explain to them that this is an activity to pretend to be fully blind, rather than vision impaired as they were earlier. All they

have to do is butter, then jam the bread, which, as they all know, is easy. Again, all blindfolds stay on until the activity is finished, which is when everyone is finished. After that, it's up to them, and sure, they can eat it when they finish, though I bet they won't want to! DO NOT help them, if they can't reach they'll have to ask one of the other girls. We all love our girls, but DON'T give in, even to the little ones. 5 minutes of discomfort won't kill them.

While this might all sound like torture, we actually used it as a bring-a-friend night, and they all had a ball! Best of all, it all fits into an hour, and we've broken through the mindset, and my girls have been much better ever since. I used this with my 5-8 year olds, and I think it would work just as well with any other age group. Perhaps even teenagers, if they were in the mood?

* * Crafts for Girl Scouts with Visual Impairments * *

>>Submitted by Heather of the Fowler Center,
<mailto:programs@thefowlercenter.org>

I think that Mask Making would be a great activity. All you need is vaseline, plaster of paris strips (it comes in a round tube and you can cut it into strips), and water. You put vaseline on the area that is going to be 'molded.' Then wet the strips in water and place over the area. Let it set for a little while until it is dry and then it will come off in the shape of whatever was 'molded.' It really does a good job of picking up the different features on faces or hands and it feels neat when it is all done.

Also, you can do a sensory activity (I know this isn't really arts and crafts, but it is fun) where you take film canisters and put different powders or pieces of things that have a definite odor. I usually use things like cinnamon, licorice, spices, candy, etc. You put each smell into two canisters and then give each participant one canister. Then they have to find their partner (the one who has a canister that smells the same as theirs). You can also do this to put people into groups - just use each scent the number of times that will correlate with the size of the groups that you want.

Fairy garden houses: building a house using sticks and green moss, and carpenters glue. You can also have them plant something that grows quickly in a styrofoam cup (just poke a hole in the bottom of it with a pencil). They would just need to water it when the soil started to feel to dry, and then would be able to feel when the plant started growing. Beans and peppers are great for this. I strongly suggest you building a house prior to asking them to do it, that way you can find out what will work best for your group.

>>Submitted by JoMarie of JoMarie's Creative Braille, Inc,
<mailto:ken@creativebraille.com>

1. Tactile cards, Using different things such as sand paper, cotton, wildflowers and etc.
2. Leather lacing
3. Painting Ceramics in which they use only one color that can be fired.
4. Glass painting in which a sighted person will put the pattern on the glass with liquid lead then after that dries they can feel that and paint in the different area's.
5. Weaving with cloth or yarn and etc.

The girls who are blind mainly need it to be tactile so that we can be able to feel what we are doing in place of being able to see it. So if you keep that in mind the blind can do everything a sighted person can do except drive.

>>Submitted by Lisa, <mailto:emyers@gte.net>

Sculpting is very therapeutic for children who are blind. In the context of a meeting, making bead jewelry from sculpy is fun. They can squish bits of clay in any shape and then string them onto a nail or wire to make the hole, and then bake. The child will enjoy feeling the beads she has made and your non-sight impaired children will enjoy the bead making as well.

>>Visual Impairment Websites:

<http://www.comeunity.com/disability/vision/index.html>

<http://www.afb.org/>

>>Other Resources

Books for the Blind, Inc.

2123 E. 38th Street

Brooklyn NY 11234

Telephone - 718-951-9081

Unfortunately, they do not have an available website, so you would have to call them for any information and inquiries, but they do have the Girl Scout books.

* * * HEARING IMPAIRMENTS * * *

>>Submitted by Jean, <mailto:seanchai@escape.ca>

American Sign Language, the language used by Deaf North Americans, is every bit as colourful and complicated as French or Tagalog. How well do YOU know ASL?

The syntax is very different, also. Instead of Signing, "I am going to the store now," you would Sign, "Me store go."

If you live anywhere close to a Centre for the Deaf, or a collage or school which teaches ASL, it might be better to have someone come to your girls and talk to them about what it's like to be Deaf, to have an invisible handicap. That person might be able to teach the girls the alphabet and finger spell a few words. But that is NOT 'sign language' but finger spelling. The Deaf community frowns on non-ASL speakers teaching the hearing community about Deaf culture.

>>Submitted by Gloria, <mailto:coffeecafe@cfl.rr.com>

One game I teach the girls which helps with their ABC's is Hangman. Here are my rules:

1. No voices can be used, only signing the ABC's. In the beginning, they can whisper their letter to one of the leader's if they aren't sure how to sign it. If you can, get them copies of the ABC's.
2. When they are ready to guess the word, they can speak only then because we haven't learned the signed words yet. Once you do learn the signed word, then NO VOICES. NO MATTER WHAT.
3. If the word is guessed, everyone does the silent cheer. Which is: both hands spread (like showing the number 5), raise them to the sky and shake them like crazy. I did this one with first years Brownies and they did really well.

The other game I actually used with adults is Signed Bingo.

You make up your own cards with the words Just like a BINGO card. The caller then Signs the word OR finger spells the word. In the beginning, I gave the people scratch paper so they could write what they thought I finger spelled. For younger girls, you can always cut out pictures of the item. Again adult help is allowed.

2. Again no voices.
3. To yell BINGO, it is the Silent cheer.
4. Once pointed to, they person will finger spell or sign the word to the caller. If they are right, they win a sticker or a small piece of candy. The adults I taught loved the game and said it gave them good practice.

Learning songs is also a lot of fun. I cannot remember the series name but check with your Library for Sign Language videos. Ask the Librarian if they have any for kids. The ones I saw had one for animals, numbers, patriotic songs, nursery rhymes and I can't remember what else.

I am hearing impaired. There are a few tips for people chatting with/to us that they don't always realize:

I am not ignoring you. Chances are I really didn't hear you.

I cannot listen to a radio, AND hear you. I have to concentrate on one

or the other. Turn it off or touch me to get my attention.

If your back is to me, likely I know you're talking, but I have no clue what you're saying. Also, don't talk to me from another room. You're wasting your time and mine, even if you raise your voice.

You may feel angry, "I've called you three times!" I do not feel bad about that; I didn't hear you. Remember: I am not ignoring you.

If you are speaking quickly, I cannot always listen that fast. If you are dropping your voice, you may drop your conversation right off the edge of my hearing range. Don't try to tell me secrets unless we're alone. I don't understand whispers well.

Don't tell me I have 'selective hearing' because that implies I do not choose to listen. Some times acoustics seem to work better, or the other person enunciates better or whatever. Also - please do not say, "Never mind" and walk away from me. You are punishing me for a hearing loss that I cannot control.

One of our family friends is known as DAVE because he has a big, booming voice. He's a delight to talk to. Another friend is a shrinking violet - she's stressful to chat with, because she speaks so low I can hear only one word in six.

Face me, if possible with light on you so I can lip-read clearly. Try not to let your voice drop too much. Be patient with me when I ask you to repeat what you just said, or when I interrupt you when I cannot hear you. Seat me across from you so I can see you. In a crowded space, with many people talking, be aware that I cannot eavesdrop, or perhaps even hear you. When there is background music, don't assume I can hear it, too. If it is quiet, 'mood music,' I likely don't know it's there at all.

You might see me, during coffee breaks, reading a newspaper or a book. I am not being anti-social; it's my way of resting from the constant having to strain to listen. I need 'down time' too!

The other thing is to ask - it's hard to have a 'hidden handicap' because most other people get testy when you ask for help. Especially if they think you didn't need it. One woman was often nasty to me when, during District meetings, I'd ask for clarification. Finally I emailed her, explaining my circumstances. She had assumed I was needy, looking for attention, that I chose not to wear a hearing aid, etc. like some fellow at her work. She was apologetic after we had an exchange, and has been much nicer since.

>>Editor's Note: I don't really think about it, but I too am hearing impaired (deaf in one ear). Jean's advice on talking to a hearing impaired person made me think, "That's exactly how it is with me!" So heed her advice, she is a wise woman!

>>Submitted by Rosie, mailto:rosie_0801@yahoo.com

I don't know how much sign language you or your co-leader know, but I think it is important for you to make sure you really know what you are teaching. I would assume you are thinking of teaching the girls the "Signed English" version of the promise, and that is NOT the same as ASL, and the girls need to be aware of the difference. There are lots of games that can help to teach sign (I'm doing the same thing with my girls at the moment.) "What's the time Mr. Wolf" is a great way to teach and practice numbers. "Deaf Chinese Whispers" is great for everything. If you or your co-leader sign, ignore this bit, but if you don't, I HIGHLY recommend you find someone who does, to come and teach your girls. This may be a Deaf person, an ASL student (who feels comfortable enough to teach a little bit,) a teacher of the Deaf, a CODA (Child of Deaf Adult.) Try contacting your closest Deaf Services Centre, or Deaf School, they will be able to help you. Don't try to learn, or teach out of a book. A book cannot teach a visual language. ASL is a language belonging to a specific culture group, and deserves respect (it's not just a "cool thing" like Pig Latin!) Also if this is an adventure you and your girls would like to partake in, it would be incredibly wasteful not to make the most of it. Sign language loses most of it's meaning if it is not in context. Context in this case, is the Deaf Community. If you want to do this properly, it will be one of the most interesting projects you've ever taken part in. Being in the USA, you have many resources that even this Aussie guide leader knows about! Gallaudet University, for instance. Have you ever seen Deaf Theatre? I recommend it highly!

We have a program over here, run through the Deaf Services, called "Deaf, Deaf World." We run a baby version of it for the new students at school. (I study Auslan- Australian Sign Language.) The aim is to turn the tables on the hearing people. It involves setting up various situations eg. a bank, travel agent, really anything involving detailed conversation. Different tables, representing the different scenarios will use different methods of communication. One will sign, at their normal speed (perhaps getting slower and more condescending,) another will speak without voice, another will mime. Extra deaf will stand around having conversation, signing at 90 km an hour, joke, laugh, try to sign to the hearing people, and give up signing "stupid hearing person" to their friend. It might sound harsh, but that's what deaf have to deal with everyday. The hearing people must go to each station, and

try and carry out the appropriate activity for each scenario. They tend to get the idea, and understand what it's like to be in the other person's shoes. I've never participated in this myself, but feedback from others shows it to be an incredibly unpleasant, but valuable experience.

A game we play at school, and I've taught my gumnuts (the equivalent of Daisy Girl Scouts in the US), is "Deaf Chinese Whispers." Whoever is running the game, should prepare a few sheets of paper with simple pictures, eg. a circle with a square in the middle, a wavy line, a house, etc. Start with very simple things, and increase as they get the hang of it. Leaders ought to join in these games, if they are learning also. They need just as much practice as the girls, if not more. Have some spare paper and pens, or a whiteboard extra. To run the game, you need teams of equal number, use their patrols if it suits. The girls need to be lined up, one behind the other, with each team about an arms length away. It's good to have a bit of elbow room. The first girl in each patrol faces the leader in charge, all other participants face the other way. The leader will draw the picture in the air, repeating a few times if needed. The girl then turns and taps the next persons shoulder, who turns around to carefully watch, then taps the next person, and so on. The last in line, runs to the front to draw on the whiteboard, or spare paper, what she saw. This is harder than it sounds to a beginner. As with all deaf games, NO VOICE, although the leader in charge can if she feels it necessary, but don't give hints, just repeat yourself again... They are only beginners after all. The most common mistake is to draw a mirror image of the original. The ability to reverse it is called transposition, so a picture must be transposed. Cool word eh? Believe it or not, once you get the hang of transposition, you'll have a lot less problems reading a street directory, I hardly ever need to turn it so it faces the 'right direction' anymore! This game can be used as I've explained, or to sign a simple phrase eg "green frog" or something like that, or a phrase you've already taught, to try and consolidate the knowledge, or a short fingerspelled word, start small, only three or four letters. This game can be used with all age groups, my gumnuts found it a challenge, but one worth working on, and I've seen it played by adults with just as much enthusiasm as kids.

There are lots of things important about teaching sign, which I've talked about in other articles, but 2 more come to mind. One, accuracy is more important than speed. Speed will come with practice, accuracy is more important. Keep thumbs tucked in when they are supposed to be, otherwise it's like trying to read messy handwriting. The other thing, is not to teach them to speak at the same time as signing. It may be appropriate in some situations, eg. You are going around the circle with each girl/leader taking a turn to remember a sign. In that case,

sign-speaking is limited to that activity, and a good way to see what the kids remember. Other than that, it's a really bad habit. Sign is a visual language, the grammar is different, and it's impossible to think visually while speaking English. If you are speaking (with voice or not) you inhibit your language learning abilities, and you can't use the correct facial expressions or lip patterns if you are jabbering away in English, or any other spoken language. Can you draw a picture with words. You can describe a picture with words, but can you draw it? Does writing "tree here" on a bit of paper tell you what it looks like or what else is around it?

Classifiers are an important part of sign languages; they are the parts of the language that make it colourful and interesting. Take the classifiers out of the language, and it becomes about as interesting as a monotone math lecture. Classifiers are mostly adjectives, the describing element of the language. It's hard for me to explain classifiers, because they are visual, not verbal tools, but if you find a deaf person, they'll teach you. They are probably more important for beginners, than actual vocabulary. If you don't know a sign for something, you can always act it, or classify it, if you know how. A great way to practice classifiers, is Kim's game, which can be varied in many ways. The object here, is not to remember all the items, but to classify which items are 'missing,' describe it, not just shout out, "the books missing!" I can tell you how to teach classifiers, but I can't actually teach them to you. Besides, I "speak" Auslan, not ASL, so it wouldn't be much help anyway. Auslan is very similar to BSL (British Sign Language) but very different to ASL (American Sign Language.) I know even classifying a car driving along the road, is different in ASL than it is in Auslan, and you'd think that was pretty basic.

An interesting challenge for Cadettes or Seniors, would be researching opinions about cochlear implants, or other such controversial issues. There is a lot of stuff on the internet. They could set up a debate, if they found themselves interested enough. They might get a bit more fired up if you give them the scenario, that they have given birth to a deaf baby, (or their friend has) what are the education options available, should they have a cochlear implant put in, etc etc. It should really get them thinking. Perhaps this could lead to a service project, creating a comprehensive pamphlet, if they find it difficult to find information. I don't know what information is available to new parents of deaf babies in other countries, but here in Australia, the information given is VERY poor. A friend of mine has a 9 year old son who is deaf, all the info she got from the professionals was "Your son is deaf, bye." Everything she knows, she found out herself, she wasn't even referred to an early intervention centre.

>>Submitted by Tracy, <mailto:Tracy.Breault@AndersenCorp.com>

We are a Brownie troop that has had the same 24 girls since Daisy's. We have a girl who is 90% deaf. She is the light and joy of our troop. She participates in the hearing impaired class at our elementary school as well.

We have never had a problem having her as part of our troop. The Girl Scout Council in your area (as part of its laws and promise) does not exclude anyone. We need a full-time interpreter for our troop when "Sally" comes to the bi-weekly meetings as well as all of our field trips and overnight camping trips. The Council set us up with an interpreter that works through the council (they usually have several different resources). Our interpreter participates in everything with us as long as she has pretty good notice and if not - the council always finds a replacement for us. At the beginning of the year, we give them our meeting dates and then she plans for those meetings. She has actually become one of our Girl Scout family and we include Sue in everything with us including doing a special recognition for her at the end of the year. Not only does she sign for "Sally", she helps our other girls at craft time too. Our other 23 girls have learned significant words in sign language and can talk to "Sally" through pointing or through certain words they now know.

Call the council - they should be providing a no-cost resource to you for something like this and provide support in the disability you need.

Websites:

Games for deaf scouts

-http://www.inquiry.net/outdoor/games/disabled/games_for_deaf_scouts.htm

American Alphabet - <http://where.com/scott.net/asl/>

British and Australian alphabet -

<http://mysite.freemove.com/redditch.deafclub>

Mostly everyone's alphabet! (this one's very long, you may have to cut and paste it)

http://www.download-games-and-free-game-downloads.com/directory/Science/Social_Sciences/Language_and_Linguistics/Natural_Languages/Sign_Languages/

<http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/portfolios/students/klshuba/edventure.htm> -

Michigan State

<http://edf3.gallaudet.edu/Projects.htm#Deaf%20Culture> - Gallaudet the Deaf College

* * * CEREBRAL PALSY * * *

>>Submitted by Mary, <mailto:insanehousewife@yahoo.com>

I have a 6 year old daughter with Cerebral Palsy, as well as a healthy 12 year old daughter who has been in GS since Daisies. I haven't signed up my younger daughter for GS yet, and I'm not sure that I will. I have a very hard time imagining her at events, both local and Council. I would love to see how other leaders have handled these challenges. I'd love her to be in, but don't see any resources to help her be an active Girl Scout. I'd love to chip in with anything I can. She is in a wheelchair, able to communicate and it is my aim to have her integrated into regular activities as much as possible.

>>Response from Rosie, mailto:rosie_0801@yahoo.com

While I haven't had experience with Cerebral Palsy, so don't fully understand, I think you should try and find a troop with leaders who are able to work with your daughter. It's certainly not fair to lend her to just anyone. Not fair to the leaders, if they can't handle it, and not fair to your daughter to be without adequate resources. Even if you have to travel a bit outside your area, I think it's worth it. While it is important to know one's limitations, us guide and scout leaders are here to focus on strengths. Basically, if your daughter is unable to participate to her fullest, someone needs a more creative mind. Perhaps by enrolling your daughter, you will be providing an opportunity for a troop out there to really live up to their Girl Scout promise and law. It's all character building.

>>Submitted by Jean, <mailto:seanchai@escape.ca>

At this time I have a Guide with mild CP. She walks without aids, but cannot run. Last winter she came snowshoeing with us. I think she fell down every 2nd or 3rd step, but she kept on going. You should have seen her face! "I DID IT!" I think, for her, the Snowshoer badge was a bit of an anti-climax!

A couple of years ago, we had a girl with a more severe case of CP. She needed a walker to get around but didn't bring it to Guides; instead, she would pull herself up on the other girls' clothes or depend on them to help her walk. She was a beautiful, clever child; I often wonder how she's getting on.

>>Submitted by Shelagh, <mailto:octamom@SHAW.CA>

I am a Sparks Guider with a girl in my Unit who has CP and cannot run or see. All year I have modified games and activities to fit her needs, and my latest challenge was an Easter egg hunt. How do you have an Easter egg hunt for 5 year olds without running or seeing? My answer and other information can be found at

<http://www.bc-girlguides.org/03resources/03specialneeds.html>.

>>Helpful Websites:

http://www.comeunity.com/disability/cerebral_palsy/index.html

<http://www.ucp.org/> - United Cerebral Palsy

* * * DISABILITY AWARENESS PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES * * *

Note: You should always contact the council indicated before starting to work on one of their patch programs to request permission to use their program and to obtain patch ordering information.

>> Girl Scouts of the South Jersey Pines, NJ

<http://www.zm.org/girlscouts/signing.tryit.shtml> - Signing Friends

Brownie Try It

<http://www.zm.org/girlscouts/signing.badge.shtml> - Signing Friends

Junior Badge

<http://www.zm.org/girlscouts/signing.ipp.shtml> - Signing Friends

Cadette/Senior IPA

Girl Scouts San Diego Imperial Council, CA

<http://www.girlscoutssdi.org/Program/PatchesandBadges.html> - Disability

Awareness, Blind Awareness

>>Girl Scouts of Orange County, DA

http://www.gscoc.org/Try-It_Booklet.pdf - Page down to the Talking With Your Hands Try It

http://www.gscoc.org/Junior_Badge_Booklet.pdf - Page down to the Talking With Our Hands Badge

http://www.gscoc.org/Try-It_Booklet.pdf - Page down to Yes I Can! Try It (disability awareness)

http://www.gscoc.org/Junior_Badge_Booklet.pdf - Page down to Yes I Can Badge (disability awareness)

http://www.gscoc.org/Interest_Project_Booklet.pdf - Page down to Yes I Can Interest Project (disability awareness)

Pine Valley Girl Scout Council, GA

<http://hometown.aol.com/GSMomJoann/whatiftryit.html> - What If You Couldn't Try It

<http://hometown.aol.com/GSMomJoann/whatifipp.html> - What If You Couldn't IPA

>>Submitted by Jean, <mailto:seanchai@escape.ca>

Just some ideas that I've gathered from various sources (SAPPHIRE and the Ontario Newsletter, as well as some improvs)

Reduced sight: smear some dollar store glasses with vasoline then try to see what the girls can see with them

Hands: tape hands up in various different ways... have them experiment and see just what they can and can't do (simple tasks like buttoning something up, writing their name, zipping up their jackets)

Speech impediment: 4 or five pieces of bubblegum in the mouth, try to talk and carry out a normal conversation

Hearing impairment: in partners, 1 person wears cotton balls in their ears while carrying out a conversation then switch. What was it like to hear the other person, what was it like to hear yourself?

Blindness: with a partner, one blindfolded... have one help the other girl around the room avoiding others and objects... afterwards how did they lead them? As the person who couldn't see, did you feel comfortable? Then show them the proper way to lead (hold the others hand with your forearms together and walk side by side with communication)

Mobility: play a circle game with a few girls (say three or four depending on the number) in chairs.... these are wheelchairs and they can't move... toss a ball from one to another around the room (can't throw to the same person twice). Did the girls in the chair have any problems and how did they feel? Do you notice any of the other girls helping a lot/too little/just right?

Sign language: have a poster with the ASL up and have the girls learn how to sign their name (good gathering activity).

Almost forgot one!! Can't remember who gave me this idea but it was a good one.

Take an egg carton and cut in half (6 places)

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(like that) and then teach the Braille alphabet by placing cotton balls in the egg dip (what are those parts called?) for the appropriate letter. Have the girls feel them and manipulate them. Ideally you could acquire 13 full egg cartons (then cut in half you get 26) so that you can just have the cotton balls into position for a complete set of the alphabet (I would recommend labeling them)... or you could have a few in a row to make up a word.... there are soooo many things that you can do with this idea.

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We had a lady who is blind and her guide dog (she corrected us on the "seeing eye dog") come to our Guide meeting a couple of years ago. She brought with her a video tape on the training of Guide dogs which wasn't

too long, maybe 15 minutes, and it was excellent. (Our district has a small TV & VCR for such purposes, but if yours doesn't, maybe a Guider could offer to bring one.) She talked about her daily routine as a blind person, the special relationship she has with her dog, etc. She brought in several items to show and tell, e.g. a Braille cookbook that she read recipes from, a money identifier, a special alarm clock with removable crystal so you can feel the numbers, etc. She then answered questions. If I remember correctly, this took over an hour. If you still have time to fill, you could have the girls identify areas in their meeting place that are not easily accessible to the handicapped. You could also have them try doing simple tasks with their right hand kept behind their back or with a blindfold. This was one of our best meetings, and the girls wanted to know when our guest and her dog could come back.

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We were able to borrow a wheelchair and crutches from the Red Cross, and our girls had to get around our school (meeting site). It is an old school, full of stairs, and so was interesting. Relays and obstacle races using crutches and wheelchairs or blindfolded, painting with brush in feet or mouth, etc. We did a booth at our Thinking Day Carnival last year that included putting puzzles together wearing mittens, or with ski masks that had wax paper across the glass (we had to add a couple of little holes, because you can't see at all through the wax paper!) If we'd been willing to wreck them, we'd have used vasoline smeared on the glass.

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- * What about variations of Kim's Game based on the other senses, like touch and tell, sniff and tell, hear and tell?
- * Or a stalking game where a blindfolded person sits in the middle with a water pistol (or spray bottle) and sprays in the direction she hears a sound of someone coming to get an object (e.g., wrapped candy) that's behind her back.
- * Describe the position of food on a plate (use paper plates and pictures from food magazines), as if it were a clock face. e.g., rice at three o'clock, chicken at 3:30, carrots at 3:45, etc.
- * See if they can walk a straight line when blindfolded.
- * Try walking with a white cane or substitute, using the cane as if it were an extension of their arm and using it to feel from side to side ahead of them.
- * Draw something specific, like a pig or an elephant, with their eyes shut.
- * How clearly can they write their name with eyes shut?

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We do a drama game in the dark that would be good. In the light: Each person chooses a sound - a whistle, a word, a sound effect and you go around the circle to be sure everyone knows the sounds. You need to pay

special attention to the sounds made by the person on either side of you. Then either in dark or light, everyone mingles around. The lights go out, and you start making your sound, and listening for the sound of the people who were on either side of you. You try to reassemble the circle by walking carefully around and listening for the sounds of your neighbours. It can be very interesting!

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As part of our staff training, we did several activities that enhance handicapped awareness.

1) Silent meal: No one was allowed to talk, only gesture or use sign language...those of us who knew it. This activity was accompanied by an explanation of deafness, and a discussion of how hard it can be for deaf people to communicate in a world where not everyone knows sign language. You can also teach some sign language.

2) Blindfold activity: This is a partner activity. One person is blindfolded, the other "guides" them by allowing the blindfolded partner to place her hand on the "sighted" person's arm. The sighted person needs to be aware of steps up or down, and vocalize this to the blindfolded individual. You can do this activity for a meal, a walk or even an obstacle course.

3) Attempting to do a task using only one arm/hand. Changing for swimming, cooking a meal, tying shoes, etc.

All these activities were followed by a discussion, so we could learn from each other's experiences

Try doing things with oven mitts on, (like a Tupperware Shape sorter that toddlers normally have very little trouble with) gives them an idea of how a disability can make you very uncoordinated.

In the past I've had my son come in to explain and answer questions about being in a wheelchair. He has also brought in special equipment that he uses to horseback ride, canoe, bicycle, and downhill ski. He also stresses that he hopes to marry, have children, and tells them about his job, and college education. Now that all children are integrated in the school system, disabilities are not the unknown of the past. I find now that people do not think the people with severe disabilities can find employment, marry, and have children.

>>More websites with Disability Awareness Activities:

<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/wims/wimsproject.html> - Walk in My Shoes

<http://www.storknet.com/cubbies/kidscrafts/blindpainting.htm> - Blind Painting

<http://www.havasumagazine.com/craft.htm#touch%20letter>

<http://agrability.sdstate.edu/BNG4H.html>

<http://www.skl.com/~guidezon/disabili.htm>

<http://members.tripod.com/~imaware/index.html>

<http://www.girlscoutsmilehi.org/pdf/pageinpage/handouts/games/DisabilityAwarenessActivities.pdf>

http://www.cnib.ca/library/visunet/white_cane_week_2003/event_and_activity_selection.htm

<http://www.kotb.com/> - Kids on the Block

<http://www.record-eagle.com/herald/2003/aug/20ins.htm>

<http://www.abilitiesfirst.org/discover.htm>

<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/general/disability-awareness.html>

<http://abe.sdstate.edu/agrability/daa.htm>

<http://www.ideallives.com/awareness.htm>

* * * SERVICE WITH A SMILE * * *

>>Submitted by Sue, <mailto:bondasks@msn.com>

A suggestion for a simple but well appreciated Service Project and a learning experience at the same time. I work as an Instructional Assistant in a preschool Autistic Support classroom. We are not able to take our kids on the playground because it is not fenced in and some of our kids are runners. Even though we only have nine children and three staff, it is not possible for us to go on the playground without one-on-one help. If older girls could give an hour of their time to help support these children they would be able to enjoy something that is an everyday experience for their typical peers but a rare activity for our children. We have not been able to take them on the playground yet this year. Our summer session just ended, but we begin again August 27th. Our classroom is located in the Warminster Recreation Center in Warminster, PA.

* * * CAMPING * * *

Think Girl Scouts with disabilities can't go camping? Think again! There are many opportunities available to explore the great outdoors for girls of all ability levels.

Check out these websites for more information:

<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/1502/camping2002.htm>

<http://www.dto.com/camping/accessible/>

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/istcclr/cch11388.html>

<http://www.campingunlimited.com/>

<http://www.nscd.org/>

<http://wmoore.net/therapy.html>

* * * DISABILITY RESOURCES * * *

Girl Scouts: Lenni Lenape Council in NJ has created some wonderful

information sheets to help Girl Scout leaders who have girls with disabilities in their troops. They are:

- Girls with Disabilities General Guidelines
- Girls with Emotional Disabilities
- Girls with Hearing Disabilities
- Girls with Intellectual Disabilities (formerly known as Mental Disabilities)
- Girls with Non-Verbal Communication Methods
- Girls with Physical Disabilities
- Girls with Seizures General Guidelines
- Girls with Speech and Language Disabilities
- Girls with Visual Disabilities

These files can be found in the Scouting Links archives (as Microsoft Word documents) by going to

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Scouting_Links_Newsletter/files and clicking on the Girl Scouts with Disabilities folder. You will need to have a Yahoo! Id to join the group, but it's free. Just go to <http://www.yahoo.com>.

GSUSA has some advice for leaders too at <http://www.girlscouts.org/adults/needs.html>.

>>Available at your council shop:

Focus on Ability: Serving Girls with Special Needs. A must resource offering practical suggestions for leaders, girls, trainers, program staff members, and anyone else looking to include girls with disabilities in Girl Scout activities successfully. This book offers information about specific disabilities, suggestions for inclusion and program adaptations, as well as a lengthy resource list.

>>Submitted by Cookie, <mailto:grugan@epix.net>

Our Pluralism Task Force put together "Abilities" kits to accompany the GSUSA publication, Focus on Ability. The kits contain things like: a tape recorder with spelling words dictated (they are muffled) to imitate hearing impairment. We have glasses that have been painted with nail polish so that vision is not clear. There are worksheets and instructions. For instance, girls put masking tape on their fingers and try to pick things up or thread a needle. This is a valuable booklet - you can really take off from it.

Here are some disability resource websites:

<http://mentalhealth.about.com/library/h/orgs/bl0918.htm>

<http://www.aapd.com/> - American Association of People with Disabilities

<http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/disabilities/page.cfm?pg=index>

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plans/lesson-26106.html> -

Special Need Resource Center

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plans/lesson-3759.html> - Adapt

Lessons to Reach All Students

<http://www.childrenwithdisabilities.ncjrs.org/>

http://www.comeunity.com/special_needs/

<http://www.disabilityresources.org/>

<http://www.disabledparents.net/>

<http://www.irsc.org/>

<http://www.kidsource.com/NICHCY/infantpub.html>

<http://www.makoa.org/index.html>

<http://www.nichcy.org/> - National Information Center for Children and

Youth with Disabilities

<http://www.overcomingdisabilities.com/?src=overture>

<http://www.rarediseases.org/> - National Organization for Rare Disorders

<http://www.resourcesnyc.org/rcsn.htm>

<http://www.specialchild.com/index.html>

<http://www.tash.org/>

<http://www.biausa.org/Pages/splash.html> - Brain Injury Association of

America

<http://www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer> - Autism Society of

America

<http://www.feat.org/> - Families for Early Autism Treatment

<http://www.sbaa.org/> - Spina Bifida Association of America

* * * WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A PERSON WITH SPECIAL NEEDS * * *

Submitted by Carol, <mailto:lorac5@MINDSPRING.COM>

Remembering that we serve "every girl, everywhere", we need to know what to do -- and not to do -- in non-typical situations. It seems to me that these speakers are not necessarily cruel, or even thoughtless -- which seems to indicate that the speaker knows better, and doesn't pay attention. I would say that these speakers (for the most part) are truly ignorant -- they simply don't know better.

I'm in another "non-average" situation. I teach visually impaired and blind children, have many friends who are have visual disabilities, and rely on crutches to get around whenever I need to do a bunch of walking, or will be walking on uneven ground (like every time I go to GS camp). I've gotten my own list's worth of comments over the years...here goes!

1) From the server at a restaurant, speaking about a blind friend: "What does *she* want to eat? (My answer: "I don't know -- why don't you ask her?"

2) From any well-meaning adult, about any child with a disability: "What's wrong with him (her)?" (My answer: "Nothing! He's just blind!"

- 3) And, the variation on #2, in a setting where there's more than one child with a disability: "What's wrong with that one?" (Again, the answer is "Nothing!")
- 4) This is one of my personal pet peeves, spoken to any person with crutches, a walker, or even an uneven gait: "Slow down!" (C'mon! I'm 53 years old, in possession of at least most of my faculties, and already walk more slowly than the general populace...I can't be trusted to set my own comfortable and safe pace?)
- 5) Spoken to a child with arthritis, who was using her crutches and walking down the hall at an almost normal pace, "Slow Down! You'll Fall!" (Sadly, the people around her succeeded in convincing her that she was a helpless invalid -- by the time she was in high school, she would sit, passively, in her wheelchair and wait for the people around her to do everything for her -- from pushing the "play" button on her tape recorder to feeding her. This was NOT a case where the arthritis prevented her from doing things!)
- 6) Spoken to any teacher or parent of a child with a disability: "You must have sooooo much patience!" (They obviously haven't seen the times I've lost my temper and blown sky-high!)
- 7) Mouthed silently, sometimes accompanied by a pointing gesture to the eyes: "Is she blind?" If I'm feeling nice, I ignore this one. If I'm not, I may answer, "What? I can't hear you!" or "Frankie, the gentleman wants to know if you're blind!"
- 8) Spoken to me, by many, many girls and adults: "Let me do that -- you can't!" (Mind you, I appreciate help when it's needed, and, on occasion, love being pampered. A far better response, however, would be, "May I help you?" or "You look like you could use a hand -- how can I help?")
- 9) Spoken to many different children with many different disabilities, when the rest of the (class, GS troop, camp group) were getting ready for an active game or relay race: "(Child's name), come with me. You can help me keep score!" (Again, well-meaning adults -- but where does that leave the child? On the sidelines! I *do* realize that not all children can participate in all activities -- but far more can participate, with modifications, than are generally allowed to!)
- 10) Spoken by a day camp director, who was telling me about the efforts she was making to recruit and include children with disabilities in her session: "Of course, we won't include children with seizures!" (At

which, I'm ashamed to say, I forgot any vestige of professional demeanor or appropriate GS language, and responded, "Why the h--- not?" After a more fruitful discussion than my response warranted, and my promise to do a presentation on first aid for seizures to the staff, she did, indeed include such girls.)

11) Spoken at the same Day Camp session, when the director had gone out of her way to include girls with disabilities. One of the leaders gushed to me, "I think it's so *sweet* that, in addition to having handicapped children, we have a handicapped leader!" That was one time that I was truly taken aback to the point of speechlessness. I'd *like* to think that, as a level II first aider, a canoeist, a life guard, a long-time special educator, and a long-time Girl Scout volunteer, I was valuable for more than my crutches!

12) Spoken to me many, many times, by educated people who *should* know better...."You teach blind children? You must know sign language!" (Uh...what's wrong with this picture? I hear from teachers of children with hearing impairments that they get the "you must know Braille" comment, too!)

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