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# TAG offers kids a bit of college

By Mary Campbell  
Of the Emerald

Summer camp for some kids used to mean eating burnt stew and running out of clean underwear, but for a group of gradeschoolers, summer camp meant the Talented and Gifted program at the University.

"Chow" means dorm food, and the dorms become sleeping quarters for 150 junior high age kids, who come to the University to attend specially designed classes. There are over 40 classes ranging from human genetics to painting, all taught by University graduate students, professors and public school teachers.

This educational opportunity, mixed with the balmy campus atmosphere, is the brainchild of University education professor George Shepard. He aimed the TAG program at "the largest group of frustrated students in our schools" — the exceptionally talented young student.

The TAG program received applications from all over Oregon and some from out of state to fill spots in one of three, two-week sessions offered from June to August.

To qualify for the TAG program, those applying must meet two or more of the criteria of achievement at least two grades higher than present level, above average measured intelligence, a special talent, proven leadership ability, or exceptional ability in the performing or visual arts.

Kelly Shea, 14, says she had to take on a lot of responsibility during her stay at the University, such as making it to class on time and learning to manage her money.

"It's kind of like you're going to college," Shea said.

Aimee Fletcher, also 14, noted the most intriguing aspect of her course work in her human fossil ancestry class — the class

observed cadavers being dissected.

"They reeked," she giggled, "but I learned quite a bit. It was fascinating. They didn't seem real."

Since the program's inception three years ago, the number of students applying for TAG has increased. This past summer, the program turned away more than 200 qualified students because of a lack of space, Shepard says.

Shepard wishes to keep numbers of students involved in the TAG program in line with the model program he designed while on sabbatical over five years ago.

"The model I have works best. Why play with it?"

The program is self-supported, and parents pay a tuition charge of \$375 which covers all expenses for the session. For students having trouble meeting the payment, the Eva Chiles Meyer fund, part of the Oregon Community Foundation, has footed the bill for more than 20 needy students over the years.

Many students evaluate the program as the most fantastic experience they've ever had, Shepard says.

"It has a tremendous impact on them and their psychological well-being," he says.

"Very few get an appropriate education. The public schools are geared for the average child, and programs are not meeting the exceptional child's needs.

"The TAG program gives the gifted person a chance to push themselves and meet others in the same situation," Shepard says.

Holly Caldwell, 14, displayed the type of attitude the TAG program attempts to instill in its group.

"I don't think of myself as an intellectual," she says. "Everyone's talented and gifted in their own way. Some people just show it more. Besides, it's OK to be smart."

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