

# Sunny Days for Camp Sunshine at the N.C. Coastal Reserve

What makes a great day at Camp Sunshine, a camp for young adults with special needs run by the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department? On their June 26 visit to the North Carolina Coastal Reserve, the answer was plankton, recycled paper, and fishy crafts! Campers joined Education Coordinator Lori Davis for a morning of fun-filled activities, including making their own recycled paper from blended pulp, netting and observing different plankton species under microscopes, and designing their own underwater creatures with crayons and stickers.

Campers enjoyed getting a little messy while blending pulp to make recycled paper, and also learned about the value of reusing materials and reducing waste that

can enter coastal ecosystems. Each camper got to take home their own recycled pieces of paper, and many had plans to create eco-friendly cards for friends and family. A trip to the docks at the N.C. Coastal Reserve's Beaufort headquarters to collect plankton samples gave campers an opportunity to experience scientific data collection in a

fun (and windy!) way. Back in the classroom, Ms. Davis led a "Water Babies" activity, designed to match well known estuarine species with their larval counterparts. The group was surprised to learn that not all "water babies" look like their grown-up versions! Then campers got to look at plankton under a microscope, which inspired several questions about plankton shapes and sizes. The final activity involved creating their own fish and associated underwater habitat using craft supplies and paper plates to construct the fish. Campers enjoyed putting personal touches on their fish to make them unique and beautiful!



Campers from Carteret County's Camp Sunshine seining for plankton.



Campers create recycled paper.

Camp Sunshine is a summertime daycamp for Carteret County citizens with intellectual or physical challenges. Camp Sunshine will visit the N.C. Coastal Reserve several times this summer, for a boat tour and a nature hike. Other camp activities range from museum tours to a day at a local waterpark. Counselor Drew says, "We like to focus on activities that the campers really enjoy". As six fascinated faces pondered what a planktonic crab might look like, it was clear that the trip to the N.C. Coastal Reserve was enjoyable for all.