MVMC camp introduces kids to diverse cultures

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On Monday, June 20, a group of Moab children visited Afghanistan for a day, exploring the country through pictures, crafts, games and lessons at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center (MVMC). Through the center’s “Multicultural Mondays” community outreach program, local kids (grades one through six) participate in a summer camp designed to develop global perspectives and appreciation for diversity.

“On the first day, we had the kids make passports to help them understand the process of travelling, even if they’ve never traveled before, and to get them excited to learn about different cultures,” said Katlyn Keane, MVMC’s volunteer coordinator. Previous lessons focused on England and Afghanistan, and students this summer will also explore Venezuela, Madagascar, Samoa, Korea and Thailand.

To learn about Afghan culture, students examined colorful scarves, viewed images of life in Afghanistan, made “evil eye” charms, and learned games played by Afghan children.

“There's a game in Afghanistan where kids tie glass shards to their kite strings and try to cut each other’s kites down,” Keane said. Instead, the students dragged balloons on strings, trying to protect their own, while looking for a chance to step on and pop a competitor’s.

The camp also incorporates lessons and readings. Each Monday, staff from the Grand County Public Library read aloud a book related to the week’s country. Students also choose between a free-reading period and Spanish lessons in the afternoons.

“The mission of the Multicultural Center is to build bridges across language and culture thorough family support, community collaboration, and education,” Keane said
The camp was created to fill a need in the community for summer programming, MVMC officials said.

“There are no other programs for kids available in this area that expose them to so many different cultural activities, and that really celebrate them in the way we do at our camp,” MVMC Executive Director Rhiana Medina said. “It's a really unique opportunity.”

The program is priced to be available to all families, Keane said.

“It’s very low cost. It’s only $15 a day, and if parents have trouble paying, we give 50 percent off,” she said. “We also have summer camp sponsors — people in the community who sponsor students. It takes $60 to sponsor one kid for the entire summer.”

The Multicultural Mondays program takes place from 1 to 3 p.m. on Mondays, through Aug. 8. Space is still available for up to three more students. For more information, email: moabmulticultural@gmail.com.

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