



**Girl Scout Creates Outdoor Environmental Science Curriculum and
Summer Camp for Kids**

Arianna Kessler from Aptos, CA, earns her Girl Scout Gold Award

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Arianna Kessler is a current senior at Aptos High School, with plans to attend UCLA as a Psychobiology major next year. Her passion for the natural world caused her to reevaluate the environmental education opportunities available for the youth in her community. After completing a research project for school that indicated outdoor education was the most effective in increasing youth's environmental awareness, she decided to create a curriculum for outdoor environmental science and implemented it in the form of a summer camp.

"The goal of my camp was to make young people in the community more knowledgeable about environmental science and more environmentally aware," she said. "I tried to increase students' knowledge of environmental concepts, and with this knowledge they can change their ecological behavior, advocate for the environment, and educate others."

Arianna designed an easy-to-follow curriculum that utilizes hands-on activities and outdoor learning to teach environmental science. Her camp took place over four days, with four-hour sessions per day and twelve students in attendance. She led a team of five youth volunteers and two adults to help out with the camp activities. Each day covered a different subject, including Renewable and Nonrenewable Resources, Ecosystems and Habitat Destruction, Climate Change and Ocean Acidification, and Pollution. At the end of each camp day, the group had an open-ended discussion about how the students could apply what they learned to protect the environment.

She also designed a [website](#) to showcase her full curriculum, which gives anyone interested in environmental education the opportunity to learn at any time! You can find all of the activities that Arianna did with her campers, along with discussion questions, key ideas, and other resources. Another youth-formed organization dedicated to protecting the planet, [The Jr. Earthkeepers](#), has expressed interest in implementing Arianna's curriculum yearly.



Arianna conducted surveys of her students before the summer camp, after its completion, and one month after it ended. She discovered that the students were not only stronger advocates for the environment, but they also had a greater understanding of the science behind environmental issues.

"The questions that surveyed the students' behavior were based on the ideas they came up with during camp on how to protect the planet," Arianna said. "Their answers revealed that 100% of students were more aware of how they could protect the environment. They also all started protecting the environment in at least one new way, including only taking the food they needed to reduce waste, leaving ecosystems the way they found them, protecting plants and animals in nature, reducing their use of paper, and eating more fruits and veggies instead of meat. I asked the parents a few questions as part of the survey, and many reported changes in their children's ecological behavior such as '[My daughter] seems more aware of single-use plastics, bringing them home to reuse or not taking them at all,' and '[My kids] seem more aware of reducing waste, turning off lights and eating less meat.'"

When asked about the most successful part of her project, Arianna said that it was the camper's progress! "The campers all had a lot of fun and learned a lot. We had many discussions about protecting the environment, and I got to see many of the campers start really thinking about the ways they could take action. They also got to spend a lot of time outdoors having fun and engaging their brains, which was great to see!"

"The two biggest things I learned about myself is that I am creative and I can persevere," Arianna said. "I had never really thought of myself as creative until this year, and part of that realization came from pushing myself to be innovative during this project. Even during certain points when my progress was frustrating and I felt like giving up, I was able to remember how important this was to me. I set a goal for myself to finish my Gold Award and I persevered greatly to achieve it."

For more incredible projects from Girl Scouts in your area, check out our [2019-2020 Girl Scout Gold Awards Yearbook](#)! Find more information about the Gold Award and how Girl Scouts are creating positive change in a community near you [here](#).

About Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 8,800 girls across six counties and is committed to making the Girl Scout Leadership Experience available to girls in ways that impact their lives both in the moment and into the future. Girls participate in troops, individual projects, council events, day camps, resident camps and more. A variety of leadership, outdoor skills, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based programs and events provide girls with opportunities to learn and explore in fun and informative ways. To join or volunteer in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara or Ventura County, visit: <http://www.girlscoutscoc.org>.

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