



# Spreading the SPAM: Sharing the Magic of the Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge

By: Kasey Bozeman & Casey Mull



## Background

## Programming

## Impact

According to Extension Community on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Task Force on Innovation, “innovation is the process of improving, adapting, developing, creating a new product, system, service, or process, large or small, to deliver better results, create value for people, or move an organization forward,” (Sept 2016).

The Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge, a two-hour activity consisting of a series of challenges that were physical, mental, kinesthetic, and even messy in nature, provides innovative programming during the Joint Reserve Component Teen Leadership Summit. Stemming from Maxine Greene’s thought regarding being “obsessive about imagination and the link from imagination to the sense of possibility” and remembering the scene with a gigantic pool of noodles from the movie *Patch Adams*, the Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge fosters teamwork, communication, cooperation, and leadership skills.



In an effort to lead an innovative activity involving life skill development, the Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge was created for the Joint Reserve Component Teen Leadership Summit. This two-hour activity involving all the teen attendees, requires minimal supplies and preparation work. Additionally, it incorporates young adult development as the 4-H camp counselors were trained to provide oversight for the different challenges. Teens self-divided into groups of 12-15 participants. Each group received different colored plastic table cloths and crepe paper to create team outfits, such as capes, headbands, wristbands, togas, etc. Allowing teens to decide their groups is a developmentally appropriate opportunity for them to make meaningful choices. Teens then received an overview about the event - each group received a map indicating the challenge locations at Wahsega 4-H Center. They must stay together as a team and complete each challenge. They can complete the challenges in any order, realizing it may take longer for some challenges to be completed than others. A counselor or adult leader provided oversight at each challenge location and verified that the challenge was complete by signing the team’s map. When the camp bell rang, teens were to have finished the challenge and return to the Rec Hall. Teens were not told that this activity was a competition; rather, the goal was all teams to complete all the challenges.

Challenge activities included:

- **Bustin’ Bubbles:** Each team receives 20sqft of bubble wrap. One team member will draw a tool card from the desk and use the tool to pop all the bubbles. Tools included a toy car, hammer, rock, flip-flop, can of soup, etc.
- **Cursive Copy:** Teams must copy using finger paint to write the Preamble in cursive.
- **Do You Taboo?:** Each team receives a series of 25 different camp-themed Taboo cards. Team members stand in a circle. One team member will give clues to the team, hoping they will guess the word. Once the word is correctly identified, the cards are passed to the next team member. This process continues until all 25 words are guessed correctly.
- **Nitro Crossing:** Teams will untie and release 10 pony beads off a 30ft clothesline. Once the beads are retrieved, all team members must swing across the Nitro Crossing and bring the beads with them.
- **Noodle-Pool-Ooza:** Teams will use their toes to retrieve 10 marbles hidden in a pool of spaghetti noodles.
- **What Starts with “F” and Ends in “IRE”?:** Teams have to use flint/steel, kindling, newspaper, coconut fiber, shredded paper, etc. to build a fire that burns for 30 seconds.
- **Panty Hose Bowling:** At the toe of the panty-hose is a tennis ball. Each team member puts a pair of panty-hose on his/her head. Using only their head and the panty-hose, youth must knock over a bottle of water on the ground.
- **Puzzles & Puzzles:** Teams will use clues to draw a three-digit number using an Etch-A-Sketch. The 3-digit number is used to unlock a combination lock on a box. Inside the box is a 100-piece jigsaw puzzle that teams put together.
- **Roll the Dice:** Teams must use a plastic cup to swirl and stack 4 dice on top of each other.
- **Search for Words:** Teams find a bag of alphabet cereal hidden on Spring Trail. Teams use the cereal to form 10 words of 4 or more letters.
- **Shave the Balloon:** Each team member gets a balloon covered in shaving cream. Using a one-blade razor, the shaving cream is removed from the balloon.
- **SPAM Carving:** Teams must work together using a plastic butter knife to carve a can of SPAM into an American flag and sing the national anthem.
- **Tater Trouble:** Teams will coat their hands in shaving cream and have to stick a plastic drinking straw through a potato.

What started as merely a fun activity at camp transformed the ways teens thought about themselves and others, how they communicated, and how worked together as a team. To date, more than 400 teens have participated in The Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge activities. Survey results from the camp indicated teen participants enjoyed the event, with one teen commenting, “the challenges at camp were so much fun. We got to do things that are fun, different, and unique. This is definitely one of my favorite things about camp!”

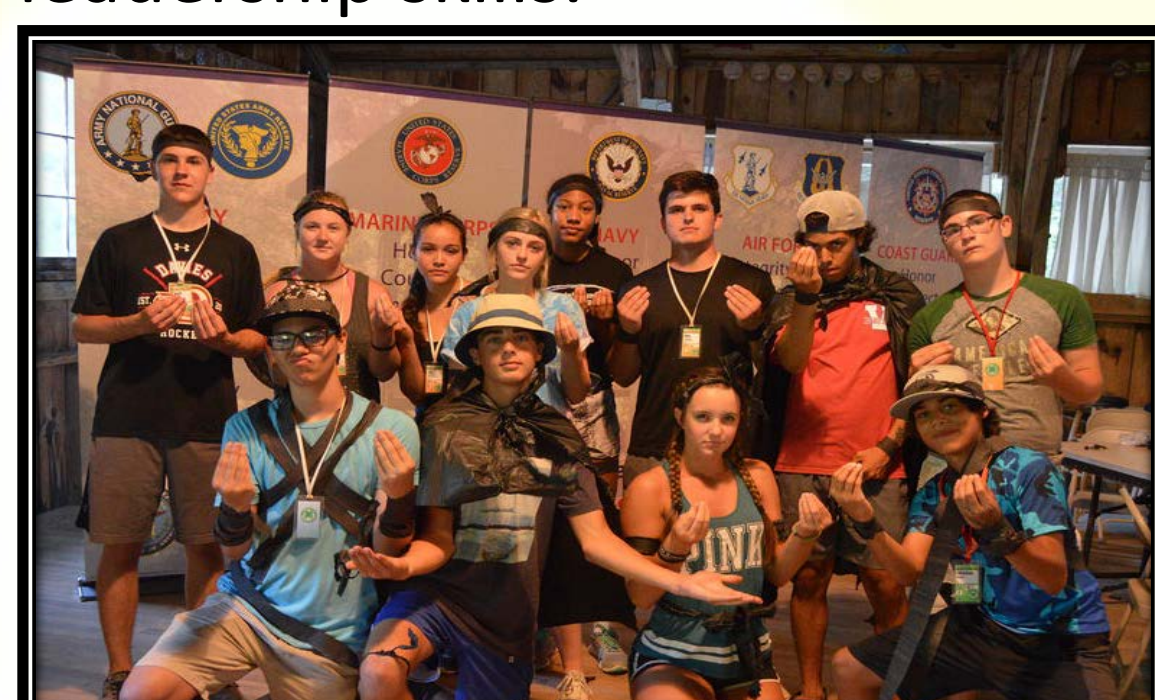
Due to the simple and low cost items needed to replicate the activity, other audiences can (and easily have) replicate The Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge. At the request of the program directors, The Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge was conducted at the Air Force Reserve/Air National Guard Teen Leadership Summit (for 150 teens) by Mull and the Georgia National Guard Teen Panel Leadership Retreat (for 10 teens) by Bozeman.

During four peer-reviewed conferences, Bozeman and Mull presented The Ultimate, Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge. Attendees received an overview about the challenges, discussed the concepts of creativity and innovation, and participated in a few of the challenges, such as SPAM carving and Taboo. Conferences included:

- National American Camp Association Conference: 22 participants from 12 states
- Georgia Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference: 31 participants from 2 states
- Georgia Afterschool Youth Development Conference: 32 participants from 21 Ga counties
- Southeastern American Camp Association Conference: 11 participants from 5 states

The workshop will be presented at Camp 4U, a summer camp staff training event for approximately 250+ counselors in April 2017.

Additionally, *The Peach Press*, the official publication of the Georgia Association of Extension 4-H Agents (circulation 240) and the NAE4-HA e-news (circulation 3,435) published information for the Ultimate Spectacular Great Wahsega Challenge. NAE4-HA members from 6 states contacted the authors for more information about the program and received a description of the challenges, list of supplies, and Taboo-style cards.



The Joint Reserve Component Teen Leadership Summit, a partnership between the Office of Secretary of Defense - Military

Community and Family Policy and Georgia 4-H, is designed for military-connected teens (ages 14-18) who have one or both parents currently serving in the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and/or Coast Guard Reserve. The goal of the Summit is to bring together teens in a high adventure context to develop their leadership skills while learning about other opportunities for reserve component military teens. Military-connected youth experience a variety of emotions and feelings. These emotions and feelings can vary from child to child, based on age, developmental level, and personal experiences. Activities during camp are designed in such a way to develop resilience and life skills in teen participants, giving them the skills necessary to be successful when faced with military-lifestyle challenges, such as the deployment of parent or moving to new duty station.



Challenges were designed to highlight different strengths in the youth team members. For example, some challenges were very physical in nature, such as the low ropes challenge element Nitro Crossing. Other challenges were mental in nature, such as the Etch-A-Sketch puzzle and jigsaw puzzle. Tactile challenges, such as untying the rope with beads, were also incorporated into the activity. Challenges also included verbal communication, such as the Taboo-like game.