

October 2017



# Camp HOPE America Pathways to HOPE Project

An Assessment of Sustainable Hope and Resilience  
Among Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the results of a program evaluation for Camp HOPE America's Pathways to HOPE Project. Camp HOPE America, the first camp in the country focused on children exposed to domestic violence, is a program of Alliance for HOPE International. The Pathways to HOPE Project is a mentoring program focused on providing year-round activities for children from Imperial and San Diego County after they return from camp. Camp HOPE America has published research on increases in Hope and Resilience after a week of camp. This evaluation examined whether or not increases in a child's Hope and Resilience from Camp HOPE America could be sustained relative to year-round mentoring and STEAM activities.

## Polyvictimization

Pathways children completed the screening tool for Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) measure. The findings from this screening provide emerging evidence that children exposed to domestic violence are also likely to experience others forms of adversity (e.g., maltreatment, dysfunctional family). Consistent with other studies within the Family Justice Center framework model, the Pathway participants had significantly higher levels of trauma compared to the general population as reported by the seminal Centers for Disease Control ACE study.

## Hope

Results of the program evaluation demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in Hope associated with their initial experience with Camp HOPE 2016. Findings also support that the Pathways Project can help sustain Hope among children exposed to domestic violence.

## Believing in Self, Believing in Others, and Believing in Your Dreams

Camp HOPE America's Resilience Scale is focused on a child's belief in self, others, and personal dreams. Results showed statistically significant increases in Resilience that were sustained across the Project.

## Attitude Toward School

Correlational analyses showed that higher Hope was associated with positive academic self-perception, attitude toward school, academic goal valuation, and academic motivation and self-regulation. These attitude toward school measures demonstrated positive outcomes in academic achievement.

## Observed Positive Character Development

Statistically significant increases in the Pathway child's character strength were observed in the following:

- Ability to create pathways and dedicate energy toward goals (**Hope**)
- Excitement and energy toward goals (**Zest**)
- Perseverance for goals (**Grit**)
- Capacity to control thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when in conflict (**Self-Control**)
- Appreciation for the kindness received by others (**Gratitude**)
- Desire to learn and seek out new information (**Curiosity**)
- Awareness of the feelings and motivations of others (**Social Intelligence**)

The results of this evaluation provide continuing support, consistent with previous research, for Camp HOPE America's programming to improve the lives of and long-term outcomes for children exposed to domestic violence.



# INTRODUCTION

## Child Exposure to Domestic Violence

It is estimated that 18 million children in the U.S. witness domestic violence each year (Summers, 2006). Meta-analytic studies consistently find that children exposed to domestic violence are at a higher risk for emotional, social, and behavioral difficulties both in the short- and long-term (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003). Moreover, children exposed to domestic violence experience additional stresses associated with the trauma of repeated separations, child custody battles, and isolation from extended family supports. Children exposed to domestic violence are also at a significantly higher risk for abuse and neglect (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

While the research on exposure to domestic violence continues to emerge, existing evidence suggests these children are at risk for increased anxiety and depression, social isolation, increased physical and psychological aggression, and propensity to perpetuate the cycle of domestic violence (Carlson, 1990; Lichter & McClosky, 2004; Litrownik, Newton, & Hunter, 2003). The higher the exposure to childhood trauma, the higher the rates of illness, disease, and criminality in adults (Felitti & Anda, 1998; Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013). Given the prevalence of children exposed to domestic violence in the U.S. and the negative consequences on their future, an effective, system level intervention is needed to provide children the opportunity to develop positive coping mechanisms that will allow them to thrive in difficult environments. One such intervention with the potential for system-level influence is Camp HOPE America (Gwinn, 2015; Gwinn, Hellman, 2017).

## Camp HOPE America

Camp HOPE America ([camphopeamerica.com](http://camphopeamerica.com)) is the first the first local, state, and national camping and mentoring initiative in the United States to focus on children exposed to domestic violence. The vision for Camp HOPE America is to break the generational cycle of family violence by offering healing and Hope to children who have witnessed family violence. Camp HOPE America is a program of Alliance for HOPE

International ([allianceforhope.com](http://allianceforhope.com)). Alliance for HOPE International is the umbrella organization for all Family Justice Centers and similar Multi-Agency Centers serving victims of domestic violence and their children throughout the United States.

## The Pathways to HOPE Project

The Pathways to HOPE Project builds on the nationally-recognized work of Camp HOPE America by creating a year-round group mentoring program for 100 campers (children and teens ages 10-17) from Imperial and San Diego Counties.

The goal of the Pathways to HOPE Project is to mitigate the impacts of trauma on children and teens with high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Scores through holistic, year-round programming and mentorship. While attending Camp HOPE America during the summer, each Pathways participant was placed in a HOPE Circle with 10-12 campers, two Pathways counselors, and two adult mentors.

At camp, each HOPE Circle participated in activities including white water rafting, tubing, zip-lining, field games, high and low ropes courses, music and the arts, horseback riding, and small group team building activities.

After children and teens returned from camp, they participated in monthly activities with their HOPE Circle. The goal of these activities was to help them focus on achieving goals for their lives and exposing them to knowledge and experiences associated with Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). Participants in the Pathways Project are eligible for a \$1,500 stipend from Verizon to help assist with their college expenses once they graduate from high school and have enrolled in secondary education. The Alliance's central goal is that through the Pathways to HOPE Project, we can change the destinies of children that would otherwise face a high likelihood of victimization, violence, incarceration, substance abuse, and other dysfunctions.

The Camp HOPE America program is a values-based, "Challenge by Choice" camping model with a focus on praising children for observed and developing character traits throughout the course of

a six-day program. “Challenge by Choice” refers to challenging children to try new activities and activities with perceived danger or risk while allowing them to opt out of those activities if the challenge creates unmanageable stress or fear. It asks that campers challenge themselves and participate fully in the experience at-hand. Recognizing that an activity or goal may pose a different level and type of challenge for each camper and that authentic personal change comes from within, “Challenge by Choice” creates an environment where campers are asked to search for opportunities to stretch and grow. The camper is responsible for determining and selecting what kind of participation level presents an optimal learning opportunity for them. Half of the Pathways to HOPE campers participated in camp at Kidder Creek Camps (operated by Mount Hermon Association) and half participated at Lopez Lake (operated by Alliance for HOPE International).

**A**t Kidder Creek, all recreational activities were supervised by trained Kidder Creek staff members who also operate weekly summer camps that are not focused on children exposed to family violence. Specialized program activities and other therapeutic components are managed by Alliance for HOPE International. The camp week at Lopez Lake and all related activities are operated and supervised by staff members and volunteers of Alliance for HOPE International. Hope, at both campsites and in all program activities, is defined throughout the weeklong camp as three things – believing in yourself, believing in others, and believing in your dreams.

**U**sing a trauma-informed camper/counselor approach, Camp HOPE America focused on providing affirmation and encouragement including campfire sessions where campers received Character Trait Awards each day from their youth or adult counselors. Everyone cheered for each child receiving an award after the observed character trait was specifically and contextually described to the entire group. Camp HOPE program activities included rafting, high and low ropes challenge courses (age-specific), horseback riding, arts and crafts, recreational hiking and field games, skits and camp songs, nightly campfires, journaling, KBAR (Kick Back and Relax) time in the cabins each day with counselors and campers, group discussions each night (“Where did you see Hope today?”), three family-style meals each day (eating with your own cabin group, and other relationship-oriented times. Each day at Camp HOPE America, there was a positive statement for the day.

In 2017, for example, these statements included: “My dreams can come true,” “I am resilient,” “My future is brighter than my past,” “Good friends can help light my path,” and “My light inspires others.” By having a positive statement for each day, children began to internalize their own uniqueness, personal progress, need for others, future focus, and perseverance. Children did not have “free time” during the camp week and children were never without a counselor or Adult Staff member. All electronics including cell phones, iPads, laptops, and other gaming devices were collected and turned off when children arrived at camp. Electronic items were then returned after the conclusion of the camping week. All key elements described above were consistent for both campsites.

**C**hildren and teens in the Pathways to HOPE Project can aspire to be Camp HOPE America counselors after beginning their senior year of high school. Most of the children and teens were receiving some level of trauma-informed care and advocacy services at the time they attended Camp HOPE America - California.

**T**he positive results of the Camp HOPE America camping program, which has operated since 2003, have been documented including increased Hope, Resiliency, and strength of character (Gwinn, Hellman, 2017).

## Purpose of Report

**T**he purpose of this report is to present findings from a program evaluation of Camp HOPE America’s Pathways to HOPE Project conducted by the University of Oklahoma’s Center of Applied Research for Nonprofit Organizations. The current report extends the findings of Hellman and Gwinn (2017) by incorporating a year-long, longitudinal process to determine if the increases in Hope demonstrated by Camp HOPE America can be sustained for one year among a sample of children exposed to domestic violence.

**T**he primary focus in this study is the longitudinal impact on children’s Hope along with a sense of belonging, support and encouragement, and believing they can achieve their dreams. The secondary purpose includes the relationship between a child’s Hope and academic-related outcomes including goal-setting, academic self-perception, attitude toward school, and academic motivation and self-regulation. The final focus reflects the relationship between a Pathways child’s Hope, Resilience, and their positive character development at the end of Camp HOPE America 2017.

## Hope Theory

The essence of Hope lies in a child's belief that the future will be better and that they have the power to make it so. Snyder's Hope Theory (2002) has two fundamental cognitive processes termed "pathways" and "agency". Pathway thought processes represent the mental strategies the child can develop toward their goals. Higher Hope children can identify the potential barriers they may experience and begin to formulate workable solutions as they pursue their goals. Agency thinking refers to the mental energy or willpower the child can direct and sustain toward goal pursuits. Higher Hope children can self-regulate their attention toward the pathways, especially in the presence of barriers and competing priorities.

The role of Hope in a child's capacity to flourish is well-established. Hopeful thinking among children is positively associated with perceived competence and self-worth (Kwon, 2000) as well as lower depression and anxiety (Ong, Edwards, & Bergeman, 2006). Higher

Hope children are more optimistic about the future, have stronger problem-solving skills, and develop more life goals. Hopeful children are less likely to have behavior problems or experience psychological distress. These children also report better interpersonal relationships and higher school achievement success in the areas of attendance, grades, graduation rates, and college going rates (Pedrotti, Edwards, & Lopez, 2008). Moreover, Hope has been shown to serve as a buffering Resilience factor when facing stressful life events among children (cf. Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). Hope is positively associated with emotional well-being and positive youth development in a six-year study (Ciarrochi, Parker, Kashdan, Heaven & Barkus, 2015). Most recently, Hellman and Gwinn (2017) found that children attending Camp HOPE America had significant increases in Hope across time and that increases in Hope were associated with positive character development behaviors as observed by Camp HOPE America counselors.



# METHOD

## Assessment Procedure

One hundred children and teens from San Diego and Imperial Counties were identified to participate in the Camp HOPE America's Pathways to HOPE Project. Parents and children provided consent to participate in the Pathways activities as well as the data collection process. Data were collected at eight points in time in conjunction with Camp HOPE America and Pathways scheduled activities. The available longitudinal group responses range from 64 and 100 Pathways participants.

Table 1 DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Pre-Camp 2016	Last Day of Camp 2016	30-Day Follow-Up 2016	September 2016	December 2016	Pre-Camp 2017	Last Day of Camp 2017	30-Day Follow-Up 2017
Hope	Hope	Hope		Hope	Hope	Hope	Hope
Camp HOPE Resilience	Camp HOPE Resilience	Camp HOPE Resilience		Camp HOPE Resilience	Camp HOPE Resilience	Camp HOPE Resilience	Camp HOPE Resilience
						ACE	
Resilience			Resilience				
			Academic Attitude	Academic Attitude			
STEAM					STEAM		
					Counselor Observation		Counselor Observation

## Sample Demographics

Specific demographic characteristics of the children were limited in the survey. However, the average age of the respondents was 13.15 years (SD = 2.13). Participating children's ages ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 17 years. Most of the Pathways participants were male (60.9%), though 39.1% were female.



## Measurement: Child Hope Scale

### Children's Hope

Hope was assessed using the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, Danovsky, et al., 1997) which examines the extent to which children can believe they can establish pathways to their goals as well as develop and maintain the willpower to follow these pathways. Both pathways and willpower are required to establish Hope. This measure is comprised of six self-report items with a six-point Likert-Type response format (1 = none of the time; 6 = all of the time). Scores can range from a low of six to a high of 36. Thus, higher scores reflect higher Hope. The Children's Hope Scale is a widely used measure with scores producing high levels of reliability across samples (Hellman et al., in press). Reliability estimates for this study ranged from .79 to .86.

### Camp HOPE Resilience

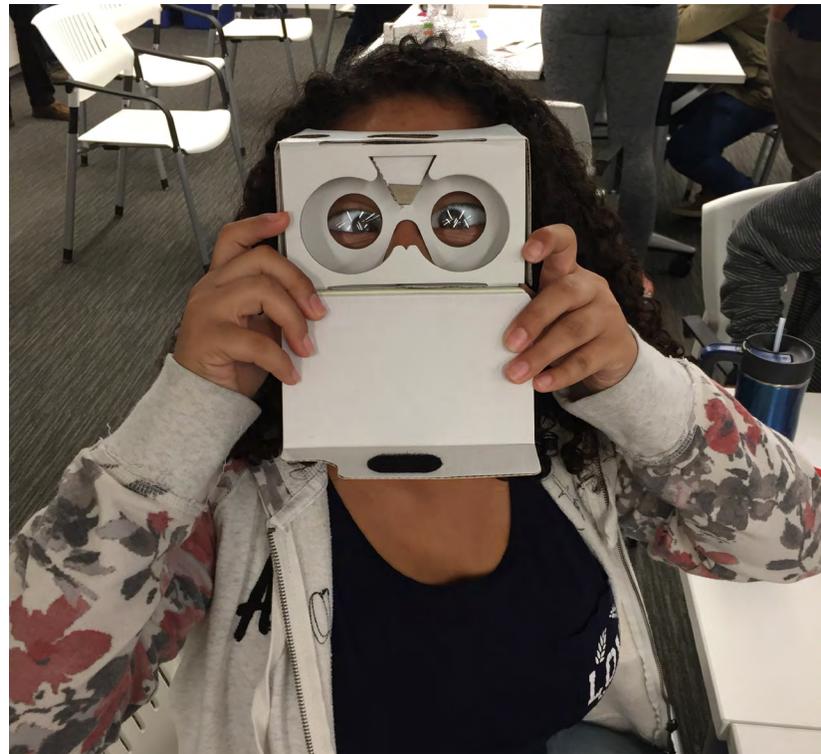
Following the Camp HOPE America theme of believing in yourself, believing in others, and believing in your dreams, the team developed six additional items to assess the child's self-reported Resiliency. These individual items were also presented with a six-point Likert-Type response (1 = none of the time; 6 = all of the time). The scale score is based upon the sum of the scores for the six items. Internal consistency reliability analysis ranged from .77 to .85.

### The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

The ACE Questionnaire is a 10-item measure on traumatic experiences during childhood. This 10-item measure is comprised of three Abuse items, two Neglect items, and five Dysfunctional Family items. Scores range from a 0 to 10 with higher numbers reflecting the number of adverse childhood events.

### School Attitude Assessment Survey Scale

School attitudes were assessed using measures provided by McCoach and Siegle (2003). The School Attitude Survey consists of four sub-scales measured on a seven-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree. The four sub-scales include: **Academic Self-Perception** (i.e. "I am capable of getting straight As"); **Attitude Toward School** (i.e. "This school is a good match for me"); **Goal Valuation** (i.e. "Doing well in school is important for my future career goals"); and **Motivation & Self-Regulation** (i.e. "I am self-motivated to do my schoolwork").



## Measurement: Counselor Observations

### Child Hope Scale

Counselors were asked to complete an observational version of the Children's Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1997) for each camper in their respective group. Items were reworded to reflect this approach. For example, the item "I think I am doing pretty well" was reworded to "I think the camper is doing pretty well." The questionnaires included the same six-item Children's Hope Scale reworded to fit the observational intent. Internal consistency reliability was adequate for the counselor observations.

### Child Character Strength

Following the positive psychology foundation that character leads to the capacity to live a fulfilling and meaningful life, we included a 20-item assessment of character strengths. Following the Character Counts model, we assessed each child in the area of **Zest, Grit, Optimism, Self-Control, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity**. Counselors rated each camper in their group at the beginning of camp and the final morning of camp. Table 4 provides the character strength observed and its definition.

# RESULTS

## Adverse Childhood Experience

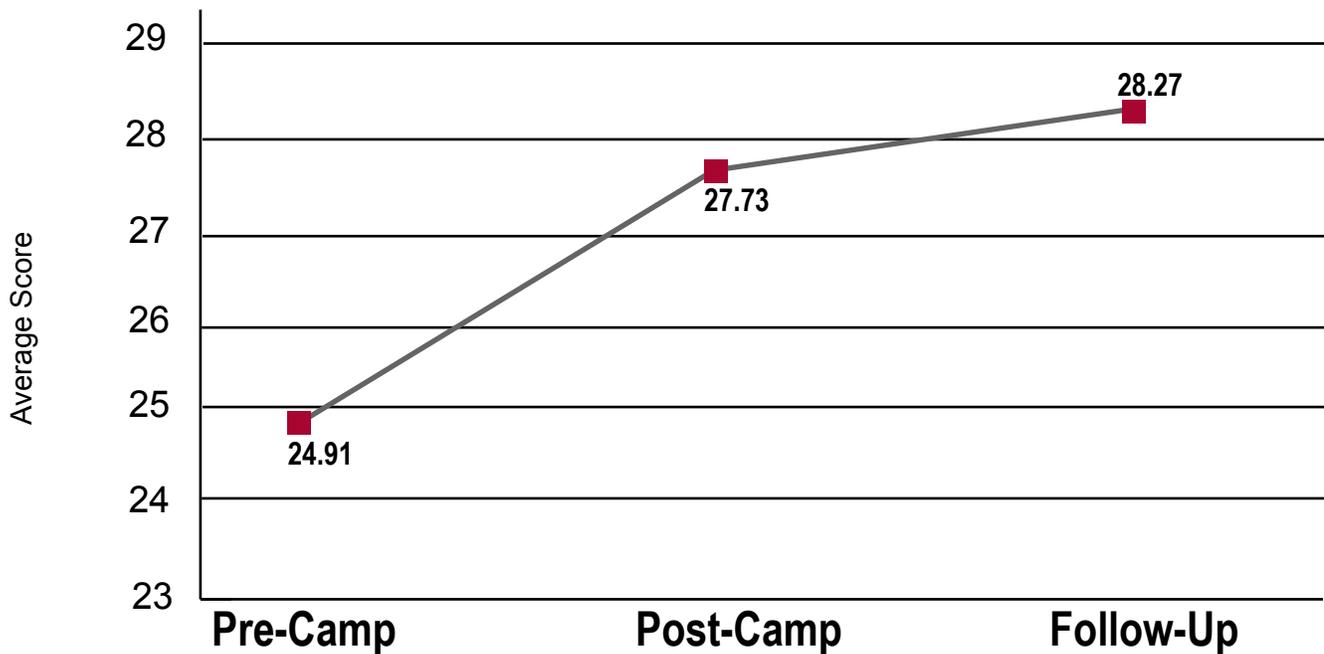
**W**ith a growing interest in polyvictimization, the Pathways Project screened for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). ACEs are known to be associated with negative consequences across the lifespan. Left untreated, those who have experienced child maltreatment are more likely to experience poor mental health, engage in health risk behaviors, and suffer physical diseases related to increased morbidity (Anda, Brown, Felitti, Bremner, Dube, & Giles, 2007; Bellis, Lowey, Leckenby, Hughes & Harrison, 2013; Dube, Anda, Felitti, Croft, Edwards & Giles, 2001; Dube, Anda, Felitti, Chapman, Williamson, & Giles, 2001; Hillis, Anda, Felitti & Marchbanks, 2001; Williamson, Thompson, Anda, Dietz & Felitti, 2002). These adults tend to experience lower educational, employment, and economic successes (Currie & Widom, 2010; Lanier, Kohl, Raghavan, & Auslander, 2015). Dramatically higher delinquency rates and criminal conduct levels have also been well-documented in adults with ACE scores greater than zero (Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013; Gwinn, 2015).

Table 2

### PREVALENCE OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

ACE Score	CDC Study (N=17,337)	Pathways Children (N=71)
0	36.1%	5.6%
1	26.0%	15.5%
2	15.9%	16.9%
3	9.5%	19.7%
4+	12.5%	42.3%

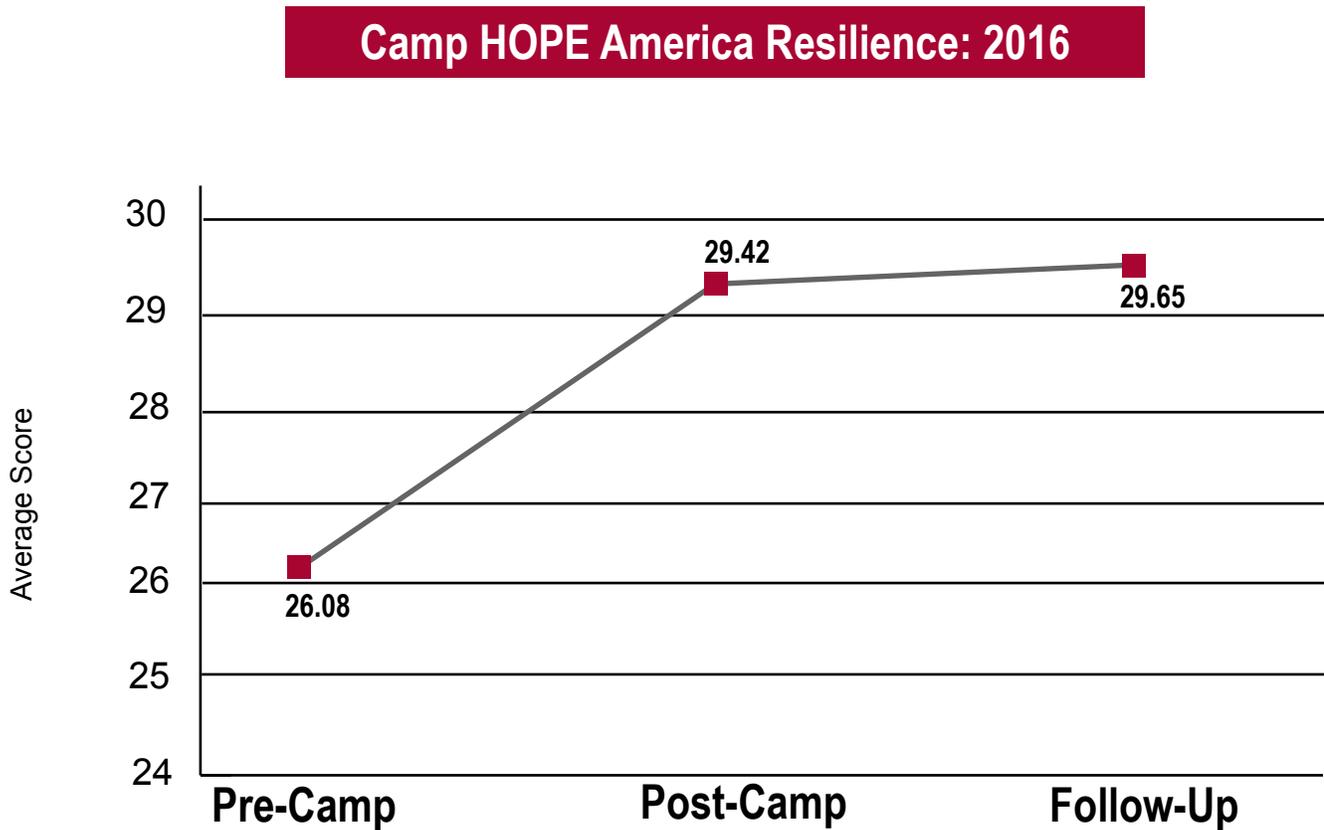
**T**he average ACE score for the Pathways children was 3.51 (SD = 2.33) with a median score of 3.0 and a mode of 0.0. Indeed, 42.3% of these child survivors had an ACE score of 4 or higher. Comparatively, the Center for Disease Control Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Study with over 17,000 participants reports that 12.5% of the population have an ACE score of 4 or higher. Ford, Merrick, Parks, Breiding, Gilbert, Edwards, et al. (2014), with a sample of 57,703 subjects, reported an average ACE score of 1.61. Results of a one sample t-test [ $t(70) = 6.86; p < .001$ ] demonstrate that the average ACE score for this sample of Pathways children was significantly higher than the national rate. Table 2 provides a prevalence of ACE comparison between the CDC national sample and the participating survivors for this study.

**Children's Hope Scores: Camp HOPE America 2016**

*Hope reflects the individual's capacity to develop pathways and dedicate agency toward desirable goals.*

Figure 1 presents the average scores for the Children's Hope Scale.

As seen in the graph, Hope Scores increased from pretest to posttest and again at the follow-up assessment. A repeated measures ANOVA showed that this increase in Hope was statistically significant [ $F(2,77) = 15.84; p < .001; \eta^2 = .29$ ]. Moreover, the partial eta square reflects a moderate degree of change.

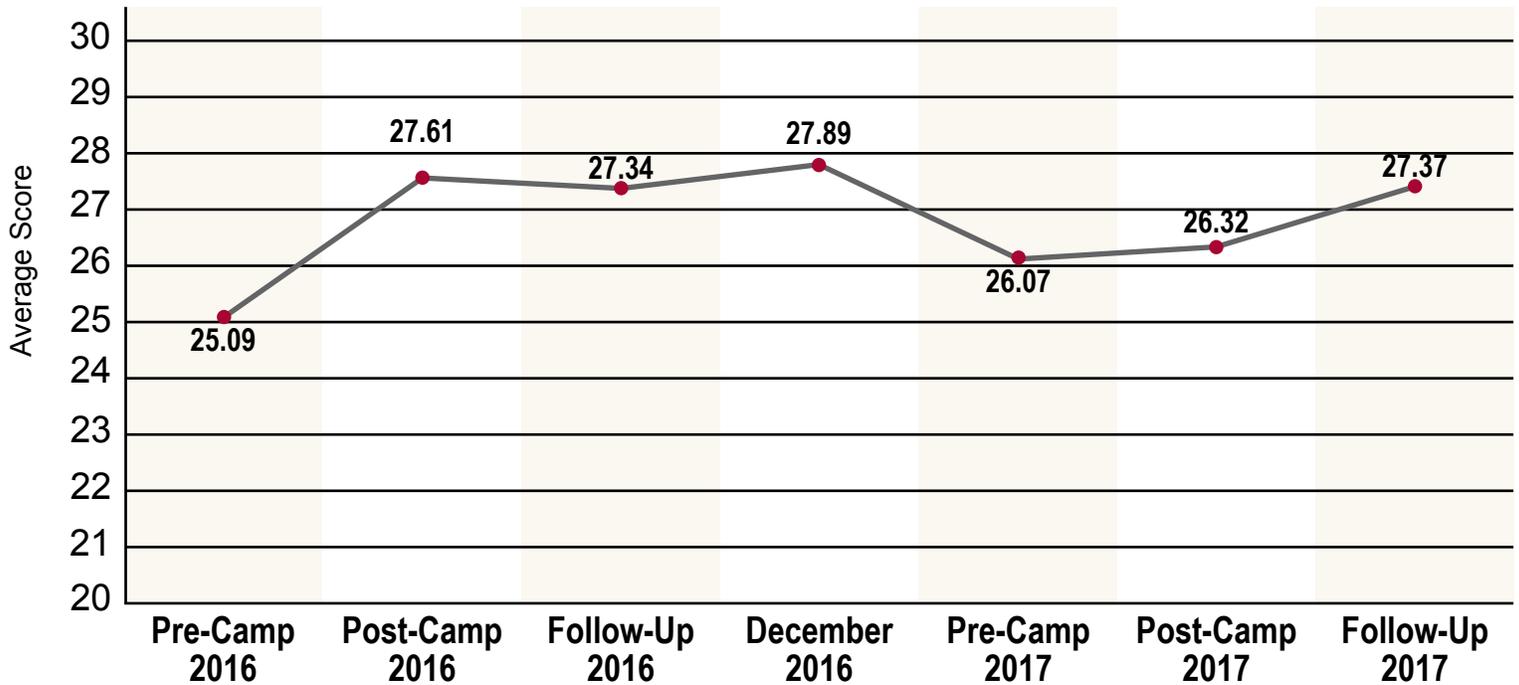


*Camp HOPE America Resilience refers to believing in yourself, believing in others, and believing in your dreams.*

Figure 2 presents the average scores for the Children's Camp HOPE Resilience scale

As seen in the graph, Camp HOPE Resilience scores increased from pretest to posttest and again at the follow-up assessment. A repeated measures ANOVA showed that this increase in Hope was statistically significant [ $F(2,76) = 15.41$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .29$ ]. Moreover, the partial eta square reflects a moderate degree of change.

Figure 3

**SUSTAINABLE HOPE SCORES**

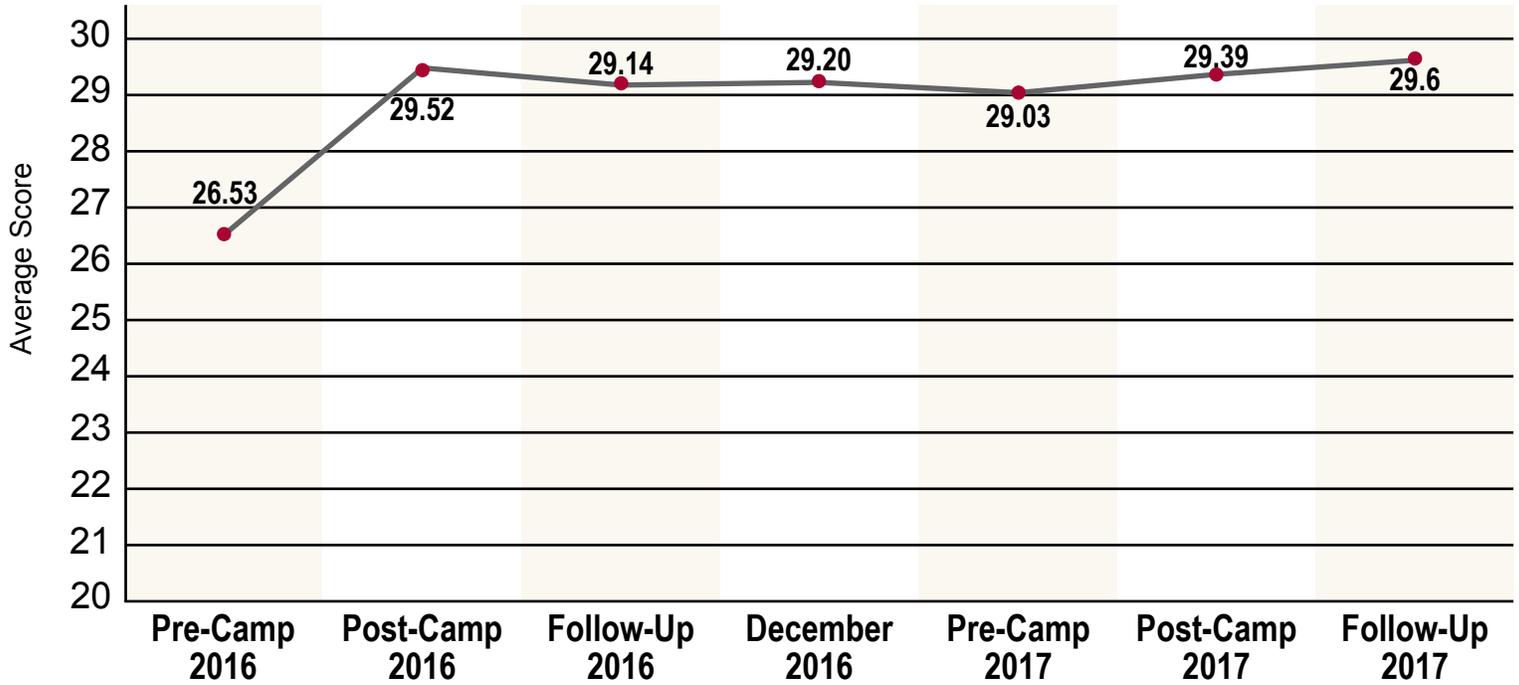
*Hope reflects the individual's capacity to develop pathways and dedicate agency toward desirable goals.*

Figure 3 presents the average scores for the Children's Hope Scale for 2016 and 2017.

In 2016, Hope Scores increased from pretest to posttest and sustained through December 2016. A decrease is observed between December and pretest 2017; however, this change is not statistically significant. In Summer 2017, scores significantly increased between pretest and follow-up assessments. This final increase between pretest 2017 and follow-up 2017 was significant [ $t(64) = -2.45; p < .05$ ]. These findings show that Hope was increased and sustained during the Pathways to HOPE Project.

Figure 4

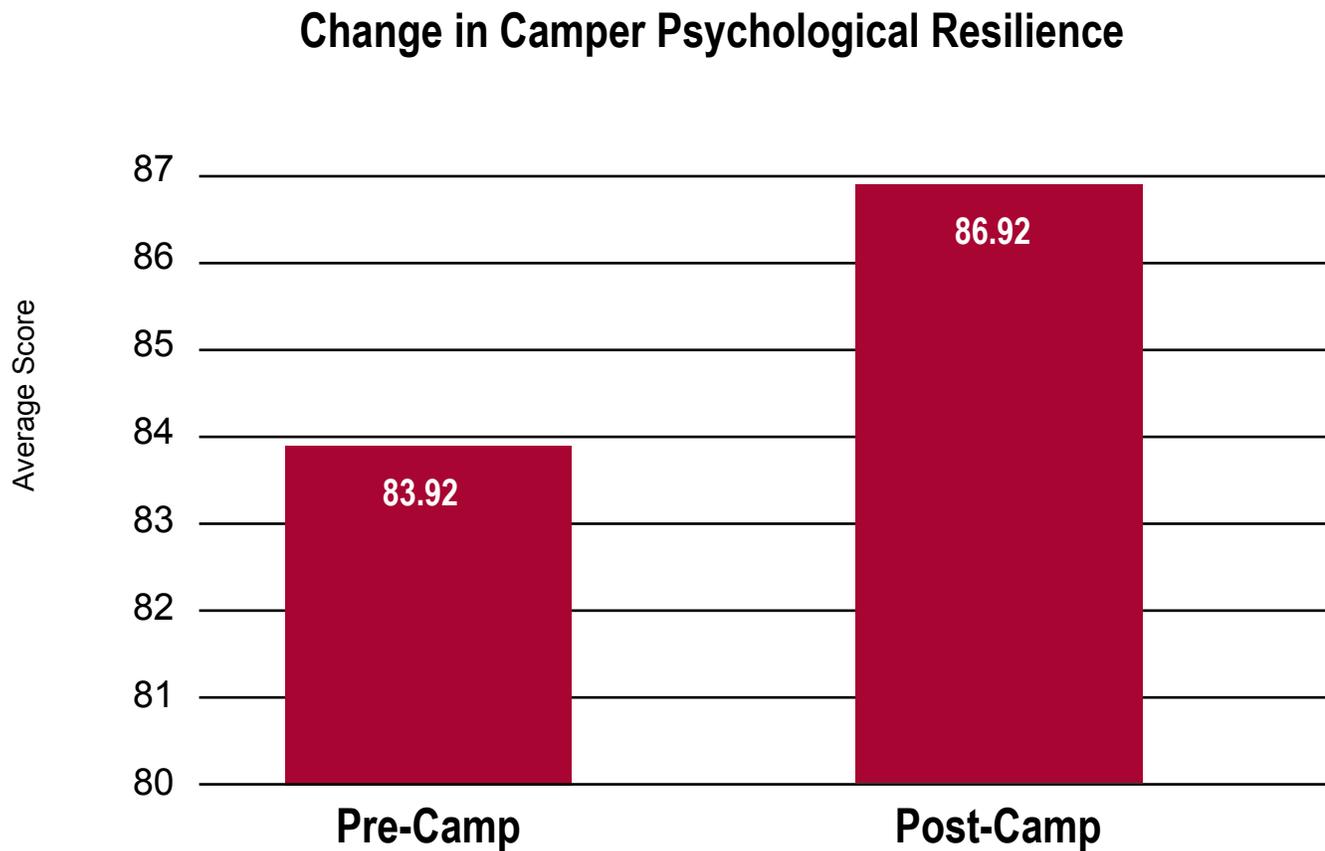
## SUSTAINABLE CAMP HOPE AMERICA RESILIENCE



*Camp HOPE America Resilience refers to believing in yourself, believing in others, and believing in your dreams.*

Figure 4 presents the average scores for the Camp HOPE America Resilience scale for 2016 and 2017

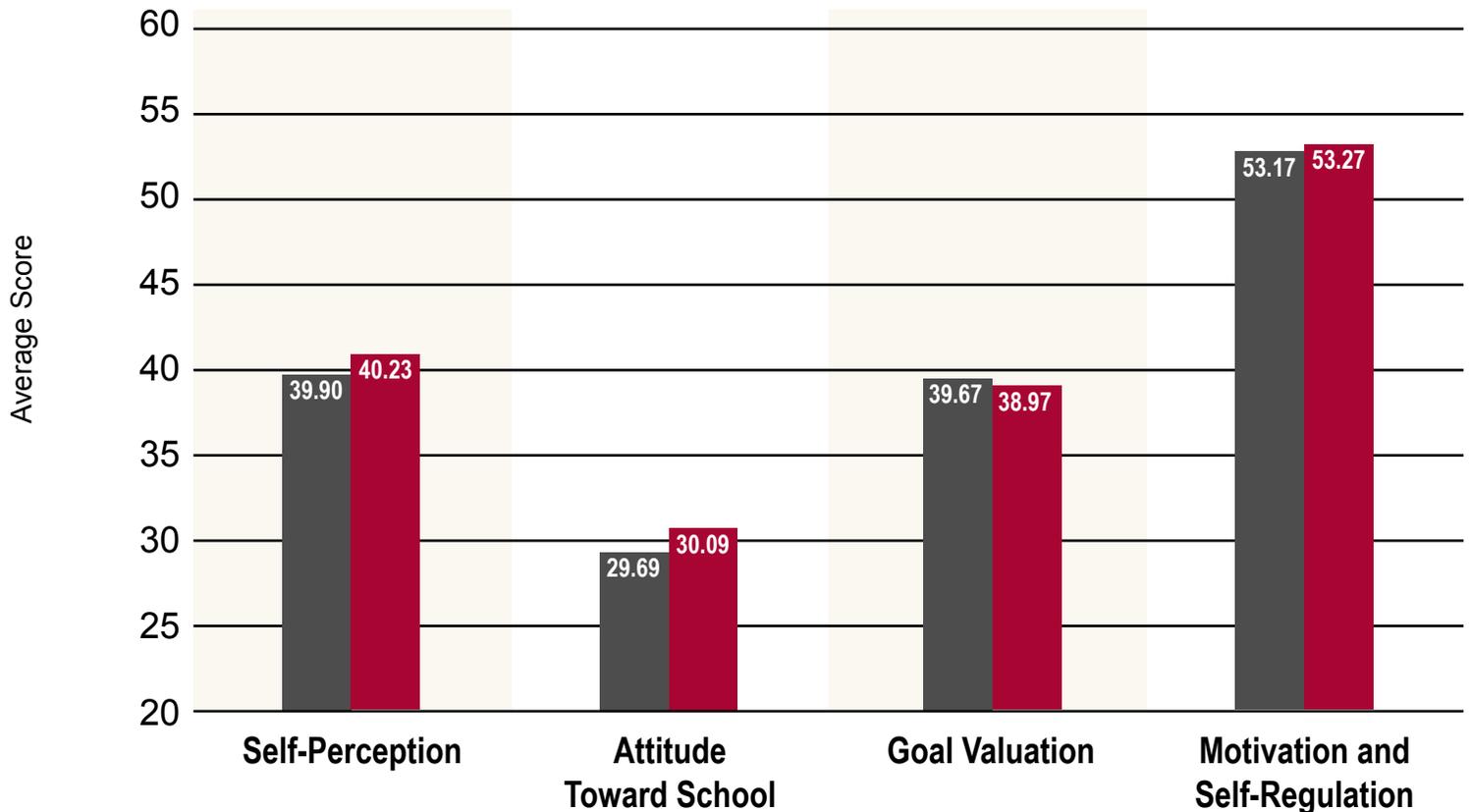
In 2016, Camp HOPE Resilience scores increased significantly from pretest to posttest 2016 and sustained through Camp HOPE America 2017. This finding shows that increasing a Pathways child's belief in self, belief in others, and belief in achieving their dreams was sustained across the program.



*Psychological Resilience reflects  
successful adaptation to life's challenges.*

Figure 5 presents the average scores for the Resilience scale

As seen in the graph, Resilience Scores increased from pretest to posttest. A paired samples t-test showed that this increase in Resilience was statistically significant [ $t(63) = -2.171; p < .05$ ].

**Academic Attitude for Underachieving Students**

*Academic Attitude reflects the perception, attitude, goals, and motivation toward school among academically underachieving students.*

Figure 6 presents the average scores for the Academic Attitude scales.

As seen in the graph, academic attitude scores remained about the same from pretest to posttest. A series of paired samples t-test were computed to examine differences in scores from pretest to posttest. However, these changes were not statistically significant.

## CORRELATIONS AMONG THE MEASURES

Table 3 below provides the correlation matrix for all the scales described in this study. A correlation represents the level of relationship between two variables. The interpretation is based upon the strength of the relationship as well as the direction. Strength of a correlation is based upon Cohen's (1992) effect size heuristic. More specifically, a correlation (+ or -) of .10 or higher is considered small, a correlation (+ or -) of .30 is considered moderate, and a correlation (+ or -) of .50 is considered strong. With regards to direction,

a positive correlation indicates that higher scores on one variable are associated with higher scores on the other variable. A negative correlation indicates that higher scores on one variable are associated with lower scores on the other variable. Using a correlation matrix is a parsimonious way to present several correlations among multiple variables. Identifying a specific correlation is based upon matching a row to a particular column.

### Examples from Table 3

On the left side of the table the column marked "item" identifies the order of the correlations. The first item "Hope" is also the next column labeled 1. The first correlation ( $r = .78^*$ ) under the Hope column represents the relationship between Hope and Camp HOPE America Resilience (variable 2). We interpret this correlation as follows: "Pathways children who scored higher on Hope had higher scores of Camp HOPE America Resilience (believing in self, believing in others, and believing in dreams) reflecting a strong positive correlation." Notice the correlation ( $r = .78^{**}$ ) has an asterisk indicating the finding was statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) meaning that the observed relationship between these two variables was likely not due to chance.

As another example, higher scores on Pathways Children's Hope (column 1) was associated with higher scores on the academic self-perception (row labeled 4;  $r = .25^*$ ) and the strength was small. One more example will look at the correlation between academic self-perception and academic motivation and self-regulation. Here we look at column 4 (academic self-perception) and row 7 (motivation and self-regulation) and find the correlation is a positive value ( $.75^{**}$ ). Thus, higher scores on positive academic self-perception are associated with higher scores on academic motivation and self-regulation and the strength is strong.

Item:	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
<b>CHILD SCORES</b>							
1. Hope	--						
2. Camp HOPE America Resilience	.78**	--					
3. Psychological Resilience	.54**	.45**	--				
<b>ACADEMIC ATTITUDE</b>							
4. Academic Self-Perception	.25*	.31*	.33*	--			
5. Attitude Toward School	.16	.07	.13	.41**	--		
6. Goal Valuation	.20	.23	.23	.63**	.48**	--	
7. Motivation and Self-Regulation	.32*	.36*	.36*	.75**	.55**	.63**	--

### Summary of Findings

Correlational analysis demonstrated that an increase in children's Hope was associated with increases in the child's belief in self, others and their dreams (Camp HOPE America Resilience), psychological Resilience, and positive attitude toward academics. Similarly, higher Camp HOPE America Resilience is positively associated with academic self-perception, academic goals, and motivation and self-regulation.

While previous graphs indicate that overall academic attitude did not significantly change, increasing a Pathways child's Hope has a positive association with important school attitude.

Note: All Scores obtained at Post-Camp. N = 64. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

# POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Following the positive psychology foundation that character leads to the capacity to live a fulfilling and meaningful life, we included a 20-item assessment of character strengths. Following the Character Counts model, we assessed the Pathways participants in the area of Zest, Grit, Optimism, Self-Control, Gratitude, Social Intelligence, and Curiosity. Counselors rated each camper in their group at the beginning of the camp week (2017) and the final morning of camp (2017). Table 4 below provides the character strength observed and its definition.

**Table 4 CHARACTER STRENGTHS ASSESSED AT CAMP HOPE.**

Character Strength:	Definition
<b>Zest:</b>	An approach to life filled with anticipation, excitement, and energy.
<b>Grit:</b>	Perseverance and passion for long-term goals.
<b>Optimism:</b>	The expectation that the future holds positive possibilities and likelihood.
<b>Self-Control:</b>	Capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they conflict with interpersonal goals.
<b>Gratitude:</b>	Appreciating the benefits received from others and a desire to reciprocate with positive actions.
<b>Curiosity:</b>	Searching for information for its own sake. Exploring a wide range of information when solving problems.
<b>Social Intelligence:</b>	Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people.

## Positive Youth Development

In recent years, positive psychology has emerged as the scientific study of the emotions, traits, and relationships that promote the capacity to flourish and serve to buffer the negative effects of difficulties often experienced in life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Furthermore, this work has identified 24 strengths of character that help young people thrive and are associated with socially desired outcomes such as academic achievement, attendance, athletic achievement, goal attainment, leadership, tolerance, kindness and pro-social behaviors to name a few (Park & Peterson, 2009). These 24 strengths have now been studied in over 190 countries with 2.6 million participants ([viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org)).

Interventions that target positive character development in youth now has a validated measurement application that can be used to promote well-being especially among those who have experienced stress associated with trauma.

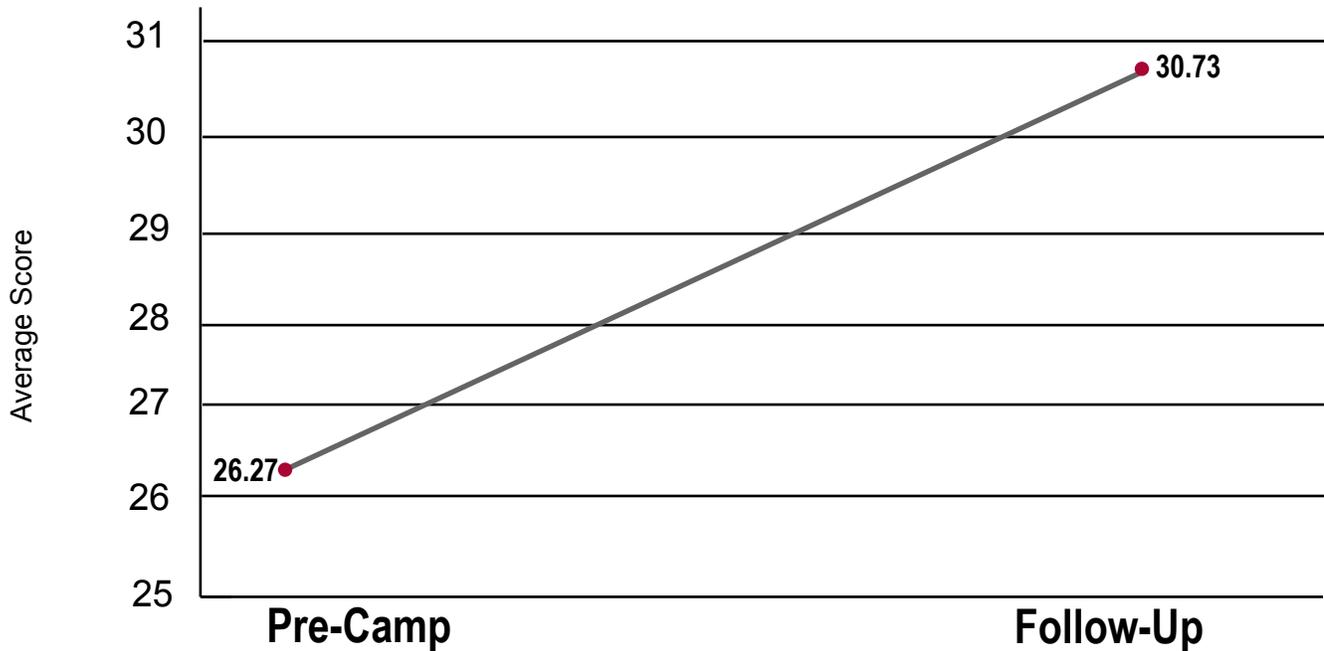
The character strengths targeted for this assessment have been consistently shown to serve as a buffer to stress and serve as an important indicator of personal character development (Park & Peterson, 2009).



Figure 7

## CHARACTER STRENGTH: HOPE

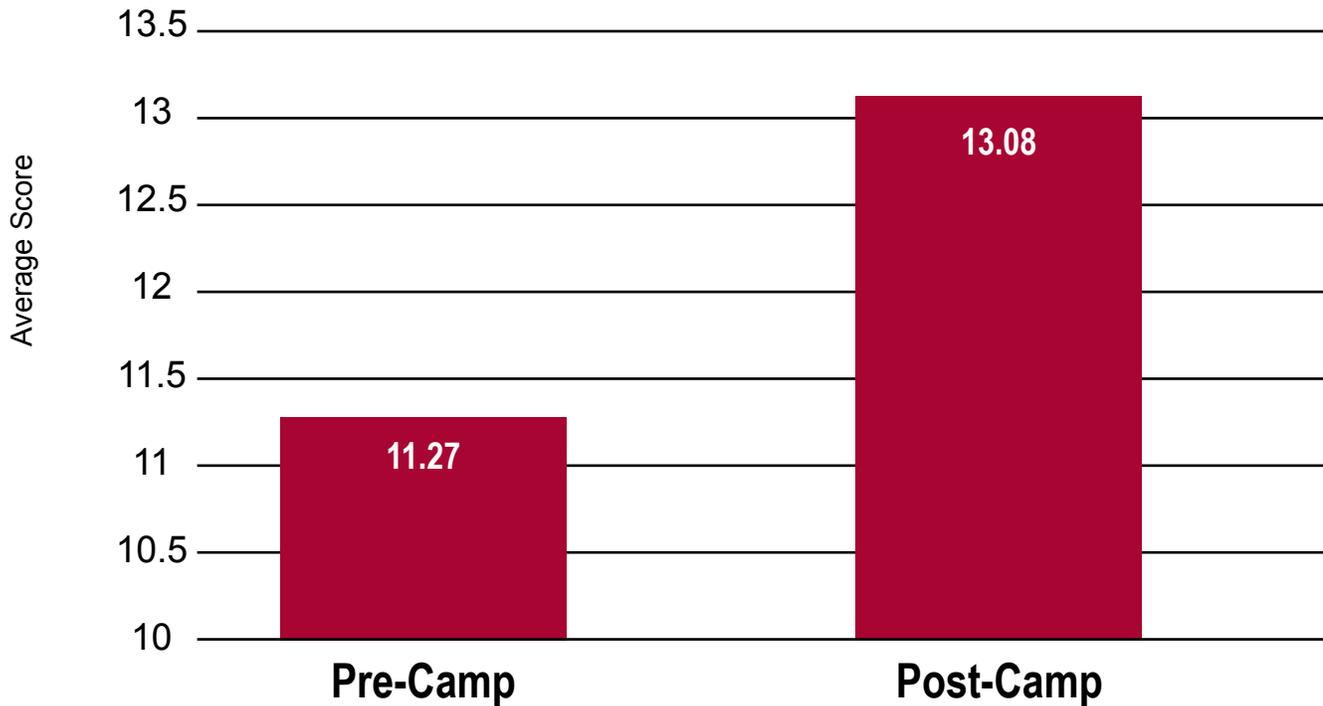
### Counselor Observation of Campers' Hope



*Hope reflects the individual's capacity to develop pathways and dedicate agency toward desirable goals.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Hope Scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Hope Scores [ $t(83) = -9.02, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the child's levels of observable Hope increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

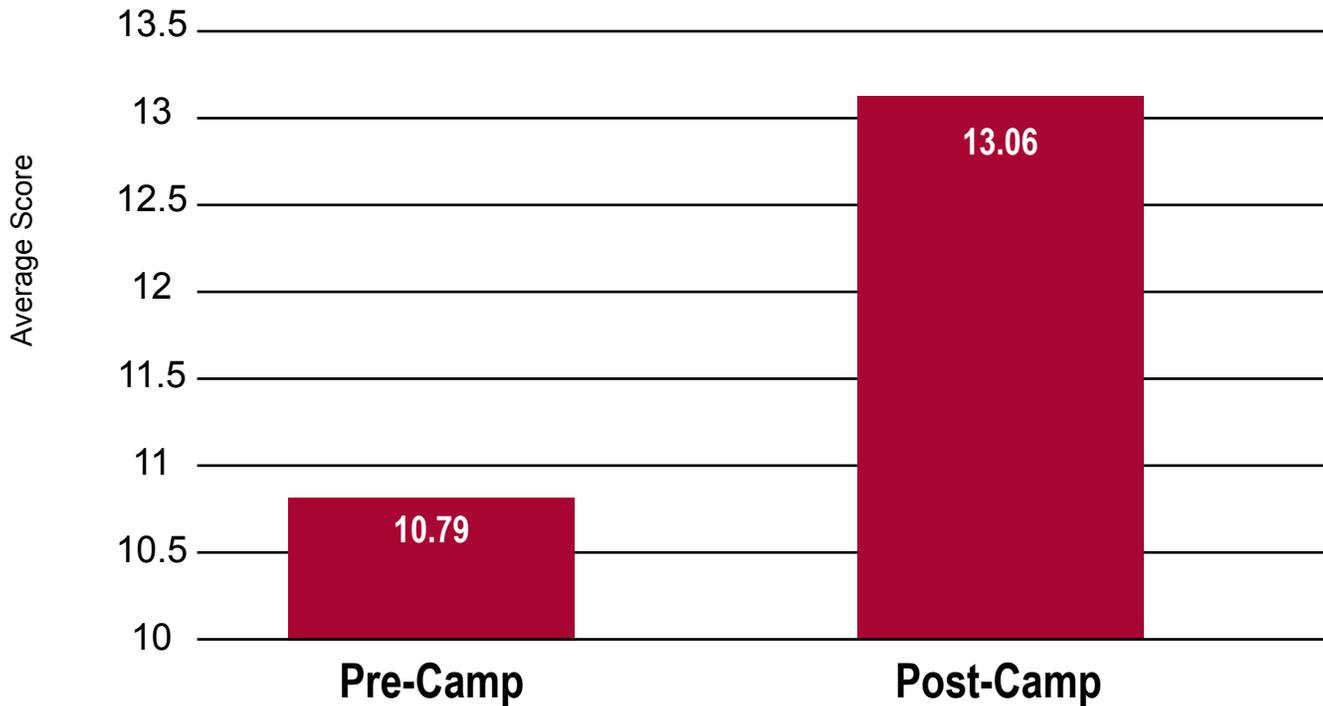
### Change in Campers' Zest: Camp HOPE America 2017



*Zest is an approach to life  
filled with excitement and energy.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Zest scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Zest scores [ $t(82) = -7.03, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the child's levels of observable Zest increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

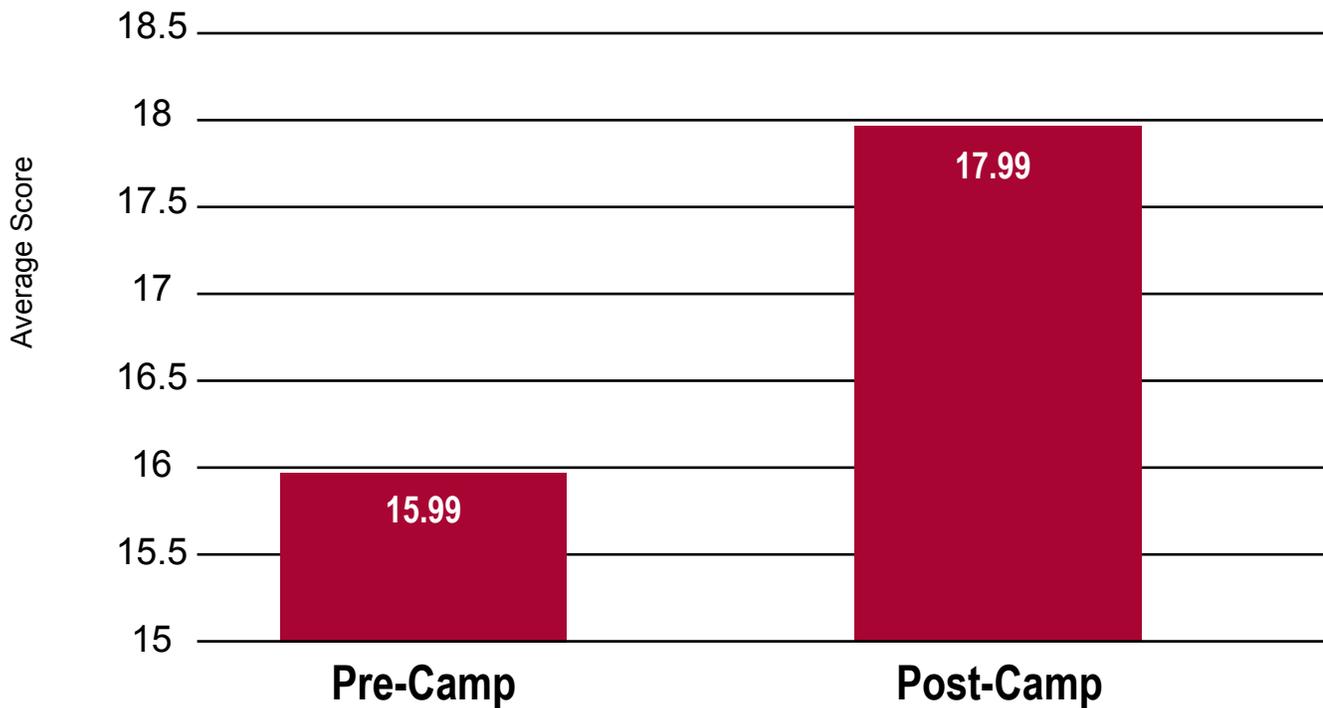
### Change in Campers' Grit: Camp HOPE America 2017



*Grit reflects the perseverance and passion for long-term goals.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Grit scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Grit scores [ $t(83) = -9.15, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the participants' levels of observable Grit increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

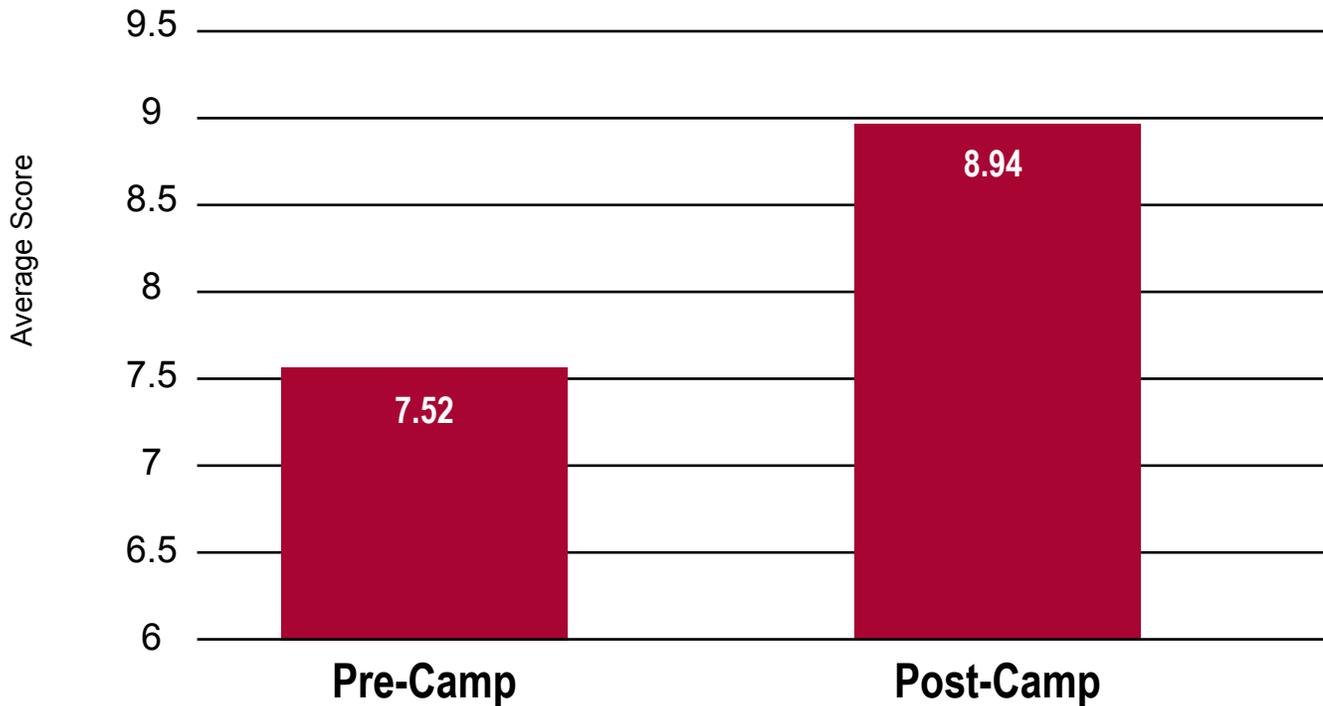
### Change in Campers' Self-Control: Camp HOPE America 2017



*Self-Control refers to the capacity to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they conflict with interpersonal goals.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Self-Control scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Self-Control scores [ $t(82) = -6.79, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the participants' levels of observable Self-Control increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

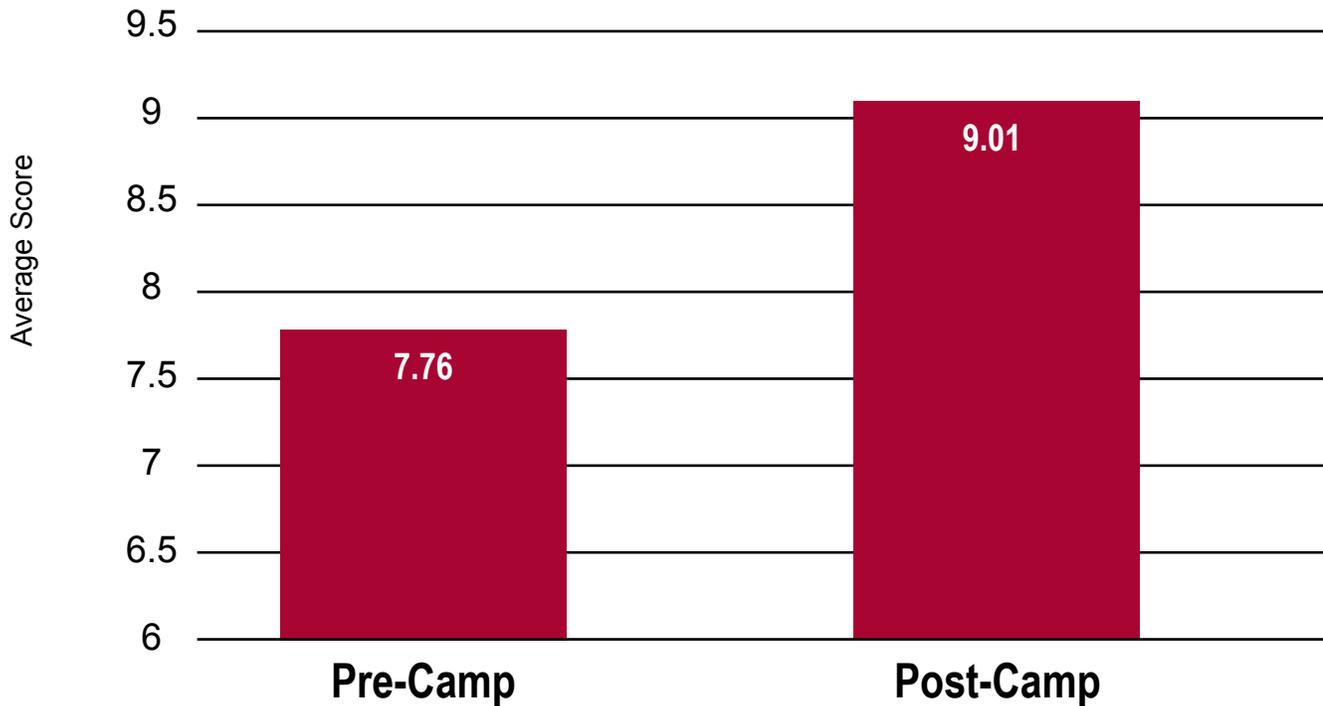
### Change in Campers' Optimism: Camp HOPE 2017



*Optimism is the expectation that the future holds positive possibilities and likelihood.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Optimism scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Optimism scores [ $t(82) = -7.94, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the participants' levels of observable Optimism increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

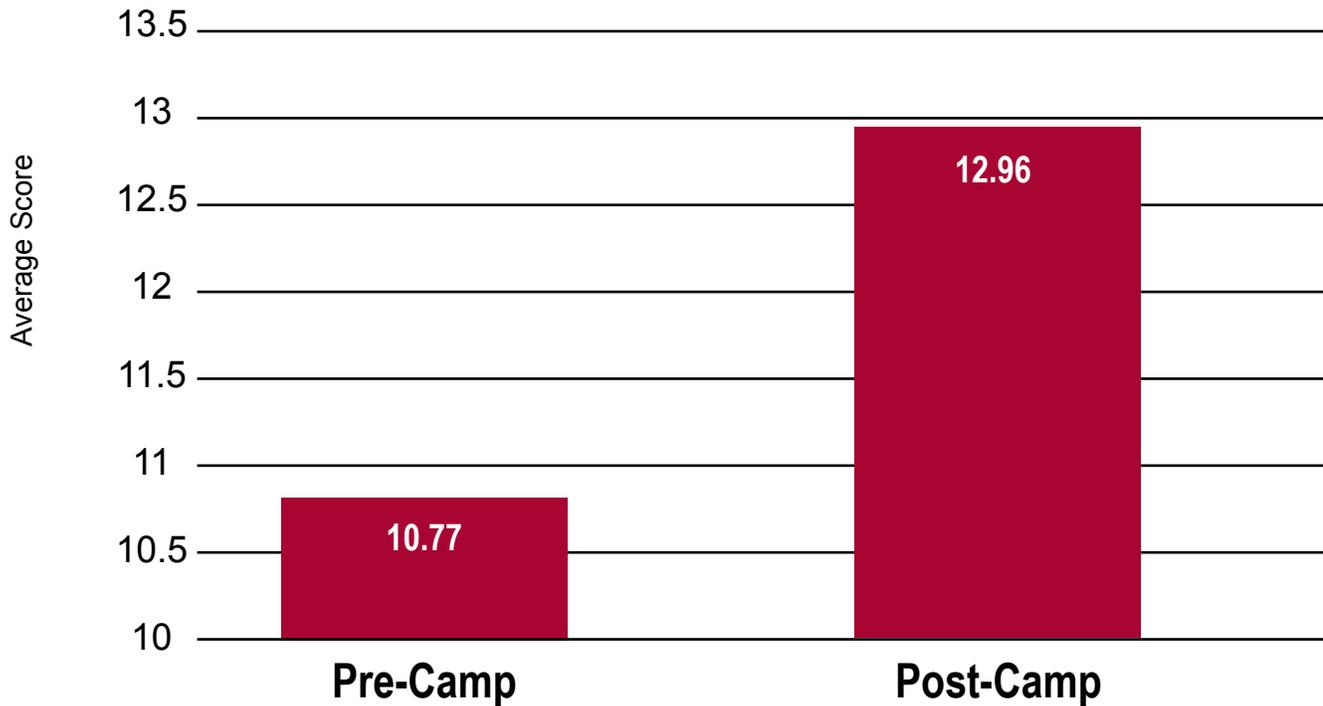
### Change in Campers' Gratitude: Camp HOPE 2017



*Gratitude is the appreciation for the benefits received from others with a desire to reciprocate with positive actions.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Gratitude scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Gratitude scores [ $t(83) = -6.92, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the child's levels of observable Gratitude increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

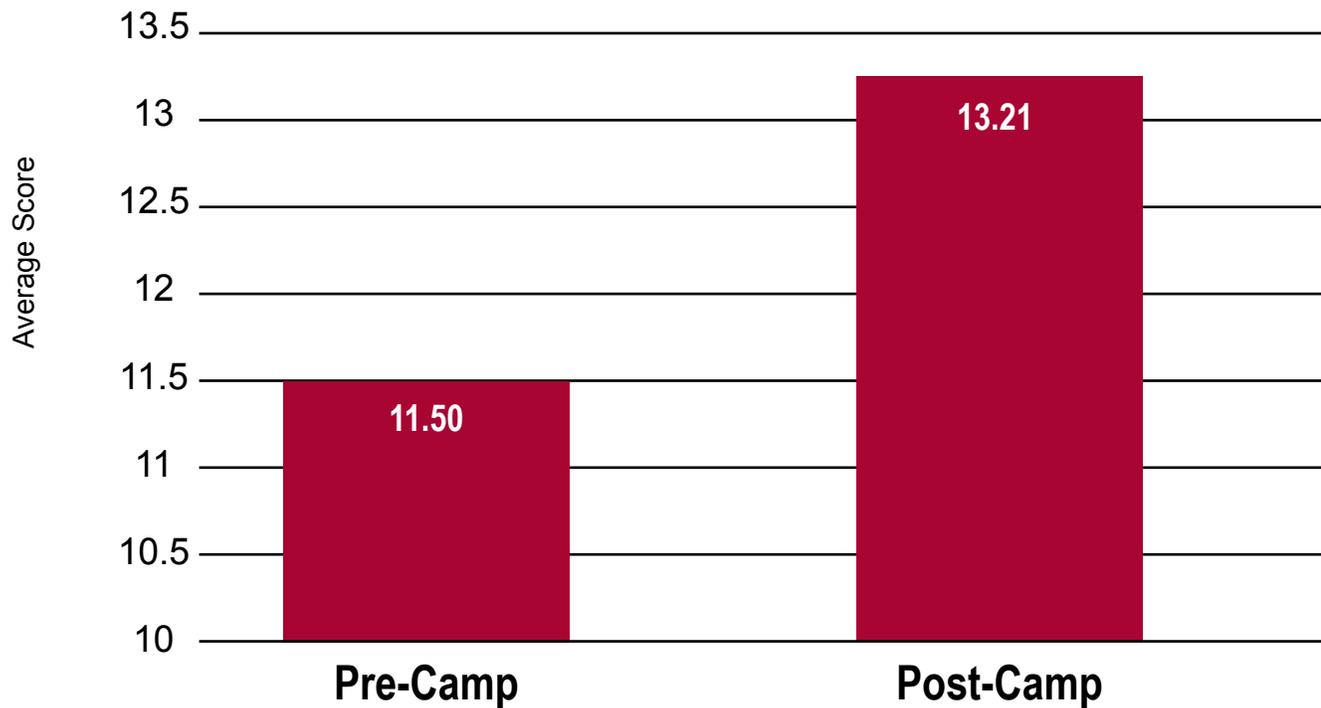
## Change in Campers' Social Intelligence: Camp HOPE America 2017



*Social Intelligence refers to the awareness of the motives and feelings of other people.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Social Intelligence scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Social Intelligence scores [ $t(83) = -7.20, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the child's levels of observable Social Intelligence increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

### Change in Campers' Curiosity: Camp HOPE 2017



*Curiosity is the search for information for its own sake.  
Exploring a wide range of information  
when solving problems.*

A paired samples t-test was computed to examine the differences in Curiosity scores. There was a statistically significant difference indicating improvement. Total Curiosity scores [ $t(82) = -6.70, p < .001$ ] significantly increased; this means that the participants' levels of observable Curiosity increased after participating in Camp HOPE America.

## CONCLUSION



The purpose of this report was to present findings from the program evaluation of Camp HOPE America's Pathways to HOPE Project 2016-2017. The primary objective was to increase the way children exposed to domestic violence believe in themselves, believe in others, believe in their dreams and find Hope for the future (Camp HOPE America Resilience). Previous research has demonstrated the capacity of Camp HOPE America to increase a child's Hope and Resilience (Hellman & Gwinn, 2017). The current report provides a further evaluation to assess if increasing Hope and Camp HOPE America Resilience can be sustained over time. Moreover, we assessed if increases in Hope and Camp HOPE America Resilience correlate to improved academic attitude and changes in positive character development.

The results of this study provide continuing evidence that Camp HOPE America improves the Hope and well-being of children. This report provides additional evidence that Pathways programming (year-round mentoring) can help sustain Hope and Resilience. Increases in the Pathways Child Hope was associated with positive academic self-perception, positive attitude toward school, and the motivation and self-regulation needed to successfully achieve academic goals.

Hope represents a positive psychological strength that promotes adaptive behaviors, healthy development, and both psychological and social well-being (Snyder, 1995). More specifically, Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib,

and Finch (2009) found that high levels of Hope were related to life satisfaction across the lifespan. Higher Hope is associated with better coping, health and health related practices (Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Feldman & Sills, 2013; Kelsey, DeVellis, Gizlice, Ries, Barnes, & Campbell, 2011). While Hope has been shown to predict various indicators of well-being, it has also been shown to be malleable in intervention studies in the areas of mental health, coping with physical diseases, and intimate partner violence (Berendes, Keefe, Somers, Kothadia, Porter, & Cheavens, 2010; Smith & Randall, 2007). Psychological strengths like Hope tend to serve us best in difficult times. The capacity to formulate pathways and dedicate mental energy (agency) is the foundation to the successful attainment of goals.

Similar to Hope, the improved character strengths (e.g., Zest, Grit, Self-Control) assessed in this program evaluation have been shown to help prevent or buffer against negative effects of stress and trauma (Park & Peterson, 2009).

The results of this evaluation support a growing body of evidence for the power of Camp HOPE America to change the lives of children exposed to domestic violence. Additionally, the Pathways to HOPE Project can help sustain Hope and Resilience year-round among children and teens who are exposed to domestic violence.

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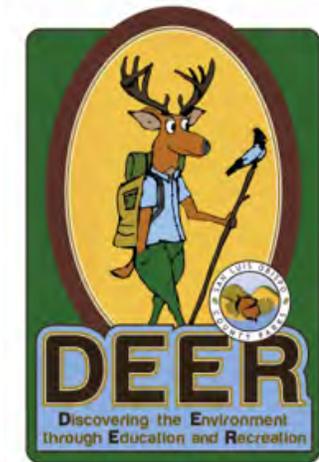


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