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SALISBURY — - Some Cabarrus County students were back in classrooms on Wednesday, but they looked more like health care workers as they wore masks, gloves and glasses.

"Don your PPEs, your personal protection equipment," said Linda Kamp, head of the dental assisting program for Rowan-Cabarrus Community College.

The students in the classroom then began mixing powder and water to form a plaster for teeth molds.

"Making teeth" in the dental lab was just one of the several hands-on activities that the 17 high school students participated in on their first day of Camp Med, a three-day summer camp that ends today.

Camp Med started several years ago thanks to a grant from Charlotte Area Health Education Center, which funds the transportation, food and supplies so that the students can attend for free.

For the last two years, Cabarrus County middle school students have attended the camp for those interested in medical careers. This year, 32 high school students applied by writing an essay about why they should be accepted, receiving a recommendation from a guidance counselor and attending orientation on Monday.

"We really wanted to give it an intensive high school focus, especially with the career-ready students," said June Leazer, career development coordinator for Cox Mill High School.

Leazer planned the events for the camp, which included presentations by and visits to Cabarrus College of Health Sciences, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, Carolinas Medical Center and the N.C. Research Campus.

For many of the participants, the hands-on activities were the best parts about Camp Med.

Sarah Knapp, 14, a rising sophomore at Central Cabarrus High School, said it was easier to learn about dentistry by "making teeth" and taking X-Rays when the students visited the community college's north campus on Wednesday than listening to a presentation.

Being at Camp Med and meeting professionals in the health care field provided an opportunity for students to explore different careers. On Wednesday, Kamp told the students about the work schedule, salary and education for a dental assistant.

"One thing about dentistry, is we don't usually work on Fridays, which is nice," Kamp said.

She even described some of the characteristics that dental assistants have.

"For any of you that are talkers, dentistry will be a great career for you," Kamp said.

While some of the students, like Jazmune Thatch, 17, a rising senior at Northwest Cabarrus High School, already know what careers they want to pursue, others, like Knapp, had a more general idea and were excited about exploring different fields through the camp.

One common interest among most of the students was that they were excited about watching a surgery through video technology on Thursday at Carolinas Medical Center.

"We get to see a surgery, and that's probably the thing we're all looking forward to," Thatch said. "We can take (what we've learned) back to our school and (inform) others."

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