

Testing the skills of life

story by midland staff; photos by jeremy marburger

A button and some thread, a dipstick, eggs and oil, a television and a computer.

These things have one thing in common: seven randomly selected students were asked to complete five basic life skills with them.

The students were freshman Cheri Bentley, sophomores Emily Schwarten and Tim Francis, juniors Amy Madej and Charles Mann and seniors Gayle Tropp and Chris Simmons.

Each student checked the oil in a car, cooked scrambled eggs, sewed a button back onto a shirt, searched the Internet for the population of the United States and programmed the time on a television.

CHECK THE OIL IN A CAR

Here students checked the oil. The students were told to find the dipstick and read it.

Each one found the dipstick and read it, but it took some longer than others.

The men finished in less than a minute with no problems. Of the women, Madej took less than a minute.

"Checking the oil and the wiper fluid is all I know how to do," Madej said.

For the other women, before reading it correctly, Tropp fumbled with the reading while holding the dipstick, Bentley took two minutes but had found the three possible dipsticks and Schwarten found it in one and a half minutes.



Name: Cheri Bentley
Class: Freshman



Name: Tim Francis
Class: Sophomore



Name: Emily Schwarten
Class: Sophomore



Name: Amy Madej
Class: Junior



Name: Charles Mann
Class: Junior



Name: Chris Simmons
Class: Senior



Name: Gayle Tropp
Class: Senior

SCRAMBLED EGGS

The students were given up to three eggs, oil, milk, salt and pepper, a small bowl, a fork, knife, spoon and spatula.

When the students scrambled the eggs, each student's eggs came out different. Some were edible while other chefs did not recommend their result.

Of the students to stand out, Bentley cracked and scrambled the eggs in a bowl and did the work in the skillet without problems.

Mann took the most time because he cracked the eggs one at a time because, being from a farm, he said if there's one bad egg it ruins the entire dish. After Mann was finished, he questioned himself.

"I wouldn't recommend eating them," he said.

But later Mann tasted his eggs and said they were good.

Schwarten said she hated scrambled eggs and later said she added too much milk.

SEARCH THE INTERNET

Students were also instructed

to find the population of the United States.

When the students started, they went right to work. Each student used their favorite search engine and most were lead to the U.S. Census Bureau website.

Five of them reported different answers. The average time was 2:70, ranging from 44 seconds by Francis to 6:28 by Simmons.

SEWA BUTTON

Students were told to sew a button back on the correct place on a shirt. They were given a needle, thread, scissors and a shirt.

Experience varied among the participants. Some students had sewn before and others had not.

Madej, Schwarten and Bentley took less than a minute. Tropp, Mann, Simmons and Francis took more time.

Tropp said her mother has sewn her buttons in the past, but after a couple minutes she figured it out and the button was secure with a large loop sticking out.

"Try to get that outta there,"

she said. "Looks don't mean anything."

Mann also had his mother sews for him and Simmons said he takes his clothes to a tailor or doesn't wear a shirt with a missing button.

When Mann and Simmons were working, they were unique because the string used to sew the button was still on the spool. After they were finished sewing, they ripped the string and tied a knot with their hands.

PROGRAMMING A TELEVISION

The task of programming the clock on a TV or VCR can sound both insanely simple and unnecessarily complicated at the same time. It's unknown how many VCRs in the United States continue to flash the numbers "12:00" every day, but they do exist.

With this thought in mind, the students were asked to change the clock on a TV, armed only with the remote control and their prior knowledge of how on-screen TV menus work. There was no manual available.

When the task was first

explained to each participant, there was a sense of "Are you serious? A child could do that!"

Once each person began the assignment, however, a serious side took over.

Some people fumbled over the buttons on the unfamiliar remote while others glided easily through the task at hand. The time it took to complete the task ranged from 30 seconds to two minutes.

IN CONCLUSION

After each student completed each life skill challenge, they agreed that it was fun. They said the challenges were overall easy but some were more difficult than others.

Francis said sewing was an obstacle for him.

"I just hope I never have to sew a button and I (plan to) wear zippers," Francis said.

Simmons said people would think these things are easy, but right away the participants found out it they could do the skills or not.

"It was challenging enough," Simmons said.



Who's Eggs?

Try to match the person with the plate of eggs they made.

	A.		1.
	B.		2.
	C.		3.
	D.		4.
	E.		5.
	F.		6.
	G.		7.

