



Gifts to the Yes Campaign provide funding to support more than 1,300 programs on campus, including a support group for teenage girls with sickle cell anemia.

Amauri Bowman received an unexpected gift while resting in the hospital during a painful episode with sickle cell anemia a few years ago.

The jewelry kit came with a note inviting her to join a group called Sickle Cell Sisters when she turned 13. This unique sorority, the note explained, brings together local teenage girls who struggle with the same disease.

"I thought it would be cool to meet other people who had sickle cell and who know what I'm going through," Amauri said. Now in her second year as a "sister," the 14-year-old Porter-Gaud student said, "It ended up being exactly what I expected."

Every other month during the school year the sisters, who all suffer from the blood disease, get together for an outing. They make jewelry. They bowl. They throw a paint splatter party.

The program is therapeutic by design but never forced. Child Life Specialist Melissa Hale said she and the other organizers don't lead the conversations. They simply provide the setting.

"At first, they are just getting to know each other," Hale

said. "By the second meeting, they start talking. Then they open up more and ask, 'Do you have ports?' 'When do you go for transfusion?' They talk about things they can't talk about with other friends who don't have sickle cell anemia."

Sickle Cell Sisters operates on \$2,500 of annual funding from the YES Family Fund. "Without the grant, there would be no group," Hale said. "The YES Family Fund supplies us with the means to provide these girls with an opportunity that they might not otherwise have – the opportunity to spend time with other girls who share the same medical treatments and experiences."

Amauri's favorite activity was visiting Charleston Cooks! last year. She and the other girls learned how to prepare ham and cheese crepes, fruit parfait, grilled chicken salad and baked and fried doughnuts. Amauri said she also enjoys the open dialogue that accompanies the gatherings.

"Sometimes you just need to talk about it, like if they just changed my medicine again," she said. "They are going through the same thing I am."