



Summer Camps 2006: Necessity Is the Mother

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Ten years ago, a troubled Colorado third grader, Tucker Cathcart, approached his mother and told her that he wanted very much to go to summer camp. Recently diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and dyslexia, the child was struggling socially and academically. Recognizing her son's need for a recreational respite flavored by academics, his mother set out to find a camp that might accommodate her son's needs. Today, that search might begin and end on the Web. A decade ago, however, Internet access was far from universal. Parents seeking information on summer camps, especially those accommodating kids with disabilities, had to rely on old standbys like the telephone, snail mail and word-of-mouth. Progress, if there was any, was slow and often produced an unsatisfactory result. Tucker's mom, frustrated by her inability to locate a camp for her son, took an unusual and risky route: She opened her own camp for children with disabilities.

Today, parents need not emulate Ann Cathcart's bravery. Instead, they can take advantage of her success – the Learning Camp, which she founded for Tucker's benefit, remains a highly successful camp for kids with learning disabilities – and the success of other pioneers like her by finding a camp that is right for their child with disabilities. They can choose from hundreds of camps and summer programs nationwide, ranging from single-session day camps, to residential camps, both small and large, to camps that are disability-specific and others that offer inclusionary environ-

ments. Whatever a camper's ultimate destination, however, there's no avoiding the hard work of discovery and preparation needed to help ensure that a child's camp experience lives up to its promise. This issue examines the summer camp experience, how to prepare for it and how to enjoy it, and the resources currently available to help families make the best possible summer camp choice.

Ann Cathcart Speaks

"I knew there must have been camps out there somewhere that could accommodate Tucker but I just couldn't find them," Ann Cathcart recalls of her struggle a decade ago, to find a camp that offered the desired balance of recreation, academics, and social interaction. Frustrated, and despite having no relevant experience except business acumen, she decided to start her own camp for Tucker.

From its very humble beginnings as a day camp near Vail, CO for kids with learning disabilities, The Learning Camp has earned a place of prominence among residential summer camps for children with disabilities. Staffed only by degreed adults experienced in teaching children with learning disabilities, or by teachers who have successfully coped with their own learning disabilities, The Learning Camp, with its intimate 20-35-camper sessions, continues as a haven for children like Tucker, now in his third year of college, who once would have found themselves left out in the cold in the heat of a lonely summer.

At first glance, The Learning Camp's journey from concept to thriving reality, appears to be a linear march to success. Ms. Cathcart, however, remembers it as anything but linear. "I understood business, but I knew nothing about running a camp," she says. To clear the decks for her immersion in her summer camp start-up, the single mother left her job as a Better Business Bureau regional CEO to focus herself totally on the



task at hand and on her son, whose social and school difficulties were steadily worsening. "I needed an income, though, and one of my Better Business Bureau friends got me a job as a receptionist for a carpet cleaning company, which paid the bills."

She enlisted the aid of her closest high school friend, a special education teacher, who would accompany Ms. Cathcart through TLC's inaugural summer as a single-session day camp accommodating 21 campers. Later, when advertising for additional camp help, she elicited a response from Tom Macht, an experienced special education teacher and school counselor who at that time was a learning specialist for Denver's Children's Hospital and a Red Cross-certified first responder. Macht is the father of four grown sons, two of whom have learning disabilities. His arrival was a shot in the arm for the camp, Ms. Cathcart remembers, and for her as well. "Not only did Tom have all the qualities we so desperately needed to operate this camp – he had hard core experience in operating residential treatment facilities -- he also wanted to date me." In 1999, Ann Cathcart and Tom Macht were married.

In the summer of 2006, The Learning Camp will encompass five sessions -- three sessions for 25 campers and two sessions for 15 campers. "I never imagined in the early days that operating this camp would be my calling," Ms. Cathcart says, "but that is what it has been and will continue to be. This camp is my life's work – and a lifetime of fun."

Supporting our interview with Ms. Cathcart are her tips for determining which camp is most appropriate for a child with disabilities as well as resources to assist parents and others in gathering information about summer camps. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of the summer camp experience. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



Building a Dream, One Camper at a Time

*An Interview with
Ann Cathcart, founder, The Learning Camp*

Ten years ago, when she began her search for a camp for her third grade son, Tucker, Ann Cathcart never envisioned the actual end result. "All I wanted was a camp for my son. I was prepared to do the required legwork, but I never anticipated in my worst nightmare that the search would come up empty – and that I'd have to take more drastic measures, like starting my own camp," she recalls.

"I started my search long before the Internet was fully formed and accessible so my search was limited. I was looking for an academic program that was very small in size. I couldn't find one. I wanted an academic program mixed with fun. I wasn't looking for an intense academic program. I wasn't looking for a school setting. I was really looking for a camp that would involve fun and friends and schoolwork – and I couldn't find that."

In the mid 1990s, she says, "there were probably some camps that did academics in a camp setting, but I couldn't locate any. I found some boarding schools that offered intense academics. They called themselves summer camps but it really entailed living in a dorm and going to classes. That wasn't camp to me. I attended YWCA camps as a girl and I knew what camp was, and boarding school wasn't it."

Now, she points out, there are so many camps available for children with disabilities. Some offer academics, "but I don't know if those camps were imitating what we started or if they were out there all the time and I just couldn't find them when I needed them."



An Ideal Camp: 35 Students and 17 Adults

In the absence of Internet access, her initial approach to locating a camp for Tucker was unintentionally scattershot. She began with learning disability organizations and accumulated information by making phone calls, asking questions and requesting information packages from camps.

"There were some older camps back east that were very helpful to me, that offered somewhat of an academic program, but their size was too big for Tucker. I couldn't see sending my little third grader across the country to a camp with 200-300 kids."

She was seeking a camp that was intimate and small because her son's processing woes were significant. "My son's processing difficulties were such that he needed someone to pay attention to him if he was tying his shoes in the morning. Getting him in the mix in a big camp was a concern to me, even if it was a camp that consisted of his population. I felt that, as a mom, small would be what I needed."

Those needs that loomed so large in 1996 are reflected in The Learning Camp, circa 2006. "Our max size is 35 children, with 17-18 adults working with them." A TLC summer program consists of four two-week sessions and one session that lasts three and a half weeks.

Humble Beginnings

TLC began as a day camp. In the first year, Ms. Cathcart says, "the children were all begging to spend the night." Her son, Tucker, who was instrumental in the design of the camp, paved the way for its evolution into a residential facility. "He was full of suggestions, with all the enthusiasm of a young child. During that first summer, he declared, 'Mom, we should have a sleep-away camp so kids wouldn't have to go home!'"



Ann Cathcart picked up her son's cue. "I went to my bank to obtain financing to make the changeover from a day camp to a residential facility. Luckily, I had been in the business world for some years and had some credibility in a business setting as a woman, which was fortunate at that time. I explained my idea to the bankers. They gave me a second mortgage on my home to finance TLC as a sleep-away camp."

TLC, she says, leased the land on which it was located for five years and then proceeded to build from the ground up, literally. "After five years we had saved our money so that we could move on and build a permanent facility, thanks to additional financing from banks, the Small Business Administration and other sources. We needed every cent we got."

A Necessity: Knowing How to Run a Business

Crucial to her ultimate success, she notes, "was my understanding of how to run and build a business and manage a budget. There are so many individuals who have great ideas for a business, but unless they have a business background they are handicapped in many ways."

Her son's needs drove her to move her concept from dream to reality fast. "My ability to put the entire package together from scratch, including knowing who to talk to, what to say and how to

juggle all the elements, help spell the difference between success and failure."

Equally helpful, she adds, were the individuals who were able to teach her and to believe in her program. "The parents of our original campers were cheering me on. This concept became a lasting, thriving reality through the help of so many, from the bankers who had faith in us, to the Small Business Administration, to all those who looked over what we were doing with a fine tooth comb and then provided us with frank and helpful assessments of our progress."

Just Two Want Ads in 10 Years

From the beginning, she says, the educational community has been supportive of the TLC concept, and its execution. "Because we eventually became a residential camp, we were appealing to children and their parents all over the world. Locally, our educational community was very supportive because teachers here, as everywhere, are overworked but are nonetheless expected to know what to do with all children although they lack the training in different learning styles. Federal law requires that all children get educated but unless the laws provide the tools to the teachers to provide that education, everyone concerned – children and parents as well as teachers and administrators – find themselves in a vicious circle."

Therefore, she continues, "it was important to me to be part of the solution and not part of the problem." That emphasis, she says, which has been reflected in the way she has built and operated



her camp, helped generate much support from her local schools and from the educators from around the nation who have worked at the camp through the years.

Educators, she says, have sought positions at TLC since its inception. "In 10 years I've put help wanted ads in the paper exactly twice." Educators learn about TLC through word-of-mouth and the Internet, she says, and those who find their way to the TLC location in Vail Valley, CO, as TLC employees, are college educated adults with degrees.

"We do not hire high school or college kids, although we occasionally hire a junior counselor in his or her final year of college." Typically, she explains, she seeks out teachers who have a deep understanding of learning disabilities. "They can be special ed teachers, or teachers with extra certificates, or they can be gen-

eral ed teachers who had been diagnosed with learning disabilities and so understand what we are doing based upon their own first-hand experience.” Some staffers, she notes, are general recreation counselors.

Compassion Is the Prime Requisite

Compassion, she notes, is the attribute that every member of her staff shares. “They must be compassionate – and possess a real understanding of kids with learning disabilities.” In addition, she says, they share a deep knowledge of learning disabilities, either through education or personal experience or a combination of both.

That experience, she explains, does not necessarily have to be derived from a staffer’s academic background. “I’ve found that some of the most highly degreed people, with vast experience in the field, are impatient with my campers. Those individuals don’t last with us. I look for compassionate professionals who will help build the self-esteem of these children, as opposed to very educated, strict disciplinarians who will yell at my kids. Someone can have all the education in the world but if they can’t work directly with these kids they are not helpful in our setting. I’m looking for compassionate and wonderfully patient adult professionals who can work with this population.”

Many camps focusing on children with disabilities experience a high year-to-year staff turnover. At The Learning Camp, the opposite scenario prevails: staff members come early and stay late, Ann Cathcart says.



For example, Lucy Barker, TLC’s “camp grammy” has been with the camp since its beginnings. “She’s 72 years old and loves what she does,” explains Ms. Cathcart.

A former teacher, business owner and camp counselor, Ms. Barker during the winter months runs the after-school program at a nearby charter school. She has been a TLC regular for seven years.

“This is Lucy’s life’s work,” Ms. Cathcart says. “She’s raised four children of her own, one of whom has severe learning disabilities that no one understood so the child dropped out of high school in ninth grade and has gone on to have a life filled with problems. She’s raised grandchildren with learning problems. She really wants to help these children, our campers, with her own personal experience, which is vast.”

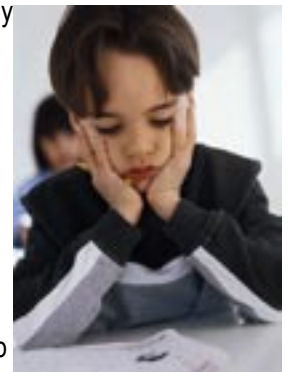
Another long-timer is Louise McGaughey, a veteran middle school teacher with a strong connection to Tucker Cathcart. “She changed Tucker’s life. She turned him from a boy who was com-

plaining about his lot in life into a young man who was motivated to get on the honor roll, which he did from eighth grade on.”

When Ms. McGaughey retired from the school system in this valley “I begged her to join us.” The retired teacher had success with Tucker because she held him accountable, Ms. Cathcart recalls. “She knew he could succeed, expected him to succeed and he wanted to make her proud. He kept trying and didn’t give up. She told him, ‘You can make the honor roll.’ As a kid, Tucker had on ongoing fear that he was going to be held back. He was afraid of the embarrassment. Louise sat him down time and time again and said, ‘You can do this; don’t give up on me.’”

Lighting a Spark

Making the eighth grade honor roll, she recalls, was an epiphany for her son. “We’re talking now about a young man, now age 22, who cannot read. He can write, but he can’t spell. He cannot do math. He has many processing problems. He has a normal IQ but the wiring in his brain just can’t accommodate his needs. I expected him to give up on getting an education as soon as he was finished with high school. He’s now in his third year of college and is taking it so slow that he’s probably only in his sophomore year as far as credits are concerned. He’s transferring to a four-year college this fall, and he is determined to get that degree. He’s doing it with tutors and assistive technology and all the other aids that are available, and sweat, as well as tears on some days. Louise McGaughey, she says, lit the spark that continues to blaze.



At TLC, Ms. Cathcart notes, Ms. McGaughey uses the same techniques to coax academic achievement from children who have struggled just to keep up.

“Tucker is not giving up, which is critical in school and in life,” Ms. Cathcart declares. “He’ll be 24 or 25 when he finally gets a four-year degree. We told him, ‘Tucker you’ve been pushing this rock uphill for a lot of years, and if you need a break, take one. But he is determined. He said, ‘If I quit, I won’t ever go back.’”

She admits that she still cries herself to sleep some nights “because I don’t want him to have it so hard.” His social skills, she adds, remain off-center and friends are an issue. “But here, at camp, he is totally accepted. He’s part of the staff and they are all friends. For all of his school years, this camp was his one point of social acceptance. The point is that Tucker’s story, to a greater or lesser degree, is the story of each of our campers. I’m grateful that it’s here for Tucker and for all the campers.”

This summer, for the first time in years, she says, some TLC staffers may depart. "I may lose a few of them this year and I am very sad about that because they become like family but they certainly deserve a summer off if they need one. My husband tells me, 'Don't take this personally.' There are a couple of staffers who have been with us since the beginning. They came to us right out of college when they were dating. Now they are married and have a baby girl and live with us every summer. Often I get wonderful people like this right out of college. At the other end of the age spectrum, there are some retired education professionals in our area who have been fabulous and have stayed with us."

Stamina Required

Ms. Cathcart is not shy about offering assistance to others seeking a camp for their child or who are considering starting one of their own, just as she did 10 years ago.

For parents considering a camp start-up, her advice is: "Get someone on your team who has a business background. Understand the insurance issues. Have a good lawyer on your side to protect you from liability issues. Make sure you understand what negligence means. Overstaff, don't understaff. There are so many issues involved with starting a program like this that you aren't aware of until you're deep into the process. Have a good team. Don't try to do everything by yourself."

She admits that in the early days, she did not follow her own advice about not performing every task alone. "Yes, I did exactly what I advise against. Fortunately, my team found me, instead of vice versa. Frankly, without that team, there is no camp."

She continues, "I was a single mother. I quit my job at the Better Business Bureau to focus completely on Tucker. I was figuratively in the fetal position for months with my thumb in my mouth thinking, 'What have I done?'"

"You need stamina for this," she continues. "When one door closes you really need to believe that another will, in fact, open. If I had taken the advice that was originally given to me when I contemplated starting this camp, from people who had been Better Business Bureau colleagues, who asked me, 'What the heck do you know about running a summer camp?', I'd never have gotten anywhere. There were many naysayers. My parents believed in me, which really helped me because they were so important in helping shape Tucker's life and mine."

Tom Macht's arrival at TLC was perhaps the pivotal event in the camp's early history, she says. "I was a single mom who knew how to run a business. He was a man with hard core experience in running residential treatment facilities. He knew how to work with kids, how to be with children, how to talk with them, how to

love them. I was next to clueless."

Clueless no longer and with a successful camp at her fingertips, she sees a bright future for smaller camps like hers that specialize in learning disabilities and other disabilities.

"Camps like ours will always be needed. I hope there'll always be places for children like our campers, like my son, places where they can get away from life and be understood. I think my camp will live on into the future for many years. I hope that by the time I'm too old to run it I will have a management team that will want to buy it from me or run it for me. I've had such fabulous luck with my staff each summer that I can't imagine them not having an interest eventually in running it or owning it. I will make that happen for them if that is what they want."

A Year Round Effort

Although TLC operates only during the summer months, Ms. Cathcart never rests. She spends the off-season traveling and promoting the camp and raising money to provide scholarship funds for children who would not otherwise be able to attend TLC. She does much of her own grant writing and meets one-on-one with learning disabilities professionals. She operates a learning foundation designed to provide scholarship assistance to 15 children each summer.

Although her camp employs little assistive technology and no computers, many of her campers use AT at home and at their respective schools. A few bring their AT to camp. "If a child has dysgraphia, we'll use a computer to help with their writing. Our academic component is focused on getting the children ready for the school year. We practice reading, writing and math, with a pencil."

However, on a personal level, she concedes, "I've just discovered some excellent AT programs for my son, like Reading Made Easy.com, produced by Premier Assistive Technology in DeWitt, MI (<http://www.premier-programming.com/home.htm>). We purchased a Literacy Productivity Pack, which includes a reader for Tuck's computer, which reads his emails and files to him, which we found very exciting. He also has a scanning and reading program so that his textbooks can be scanned."

"I'll Die Running This Camp"

Ann Cathcart intends to run TLC indefinitely. "I'll die running it. After all the hard work we've put in, I can't imagine walking away."

"The first five years we were on this land and in this facility were very



hard," she admits. "There have been so many sleepless nights because we were in so far over our heads. We were so scared. And then after 9/11, the world changed. Travel habits changed. We changed too. We rejiggered our numbers and our bank loans. There were a couple of instances during that period when I said to Tucker, 'Why don't we just sell it all and I'll go get a 'real' job and your dad will get a real job and we'll start over.'"

Tucker, however was adamant in his desire to keep going. He replied, "But Mom, what about all the kids who need this camp?"

"I hope we're making a difference," she concludes. "You have to have a passion for that to make these camps work as they should, for the kids."



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ANN CATHCART'S TIPS FOR CHOOSING A SUMMER CAMP FOR A CHILD WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

1. Be certain that camp officials will take good care of your child. If camp administrators are too busy to return your phone calls, or take the time to talk at length with you, will they be too busy for your child as well?
2. Feel free to ask for references; talk to other parents about their experiences with the camp.
3. Decide early what type of program you want for your child. Day camp or residential? Do you want your child to be mainstreamed or to attend a camp that focuses on your child's specific needs?
4. Talk to your child about what he or she would like in a summer camp.
5. Be certain your child is prepared to cope with the length of program you select.
6. What size camp is best for your child? Small-scale camps range from 30-40 campers per session. Large camps range upward to 400 campers.
7. Determine the best educational and recreational mix for your child. Many camps for children with learning disabilities are purely recreational. Others are mixed.
8. Choose the camp setting your child will most enjoy. Camp characteristics often differ by region of the country.
9. Ask about eating, sleeping, bathing and medical facilities.
10. Ask about the ages and education levels of the counselors.
11. When working with children with disabilities, a ratio of one counselor for four students is preferred.
12. Will the child be encouraged to write to his/her family?
13. Will phone calls to and from home be allowed? If not, what is the recommended form of communication for the camp?
14. How are disciplinary issues addressed?
15. Be certain you are comfortable with the policies of the camp and that your child will flourish in the camp setting you select.
16. Summer camp should focus on enhancing your child's self-esteem and independence. The successful camp experience should improve social skills and provide quality peer relationships. A camper should return home feeling better about him/herself than when camp began.

RESOURCES

Articles

Choosing the Right Summer Camp

By Terri Mauro

Parenting and Family - 2006

Ms. Mauro, the mother of two special needs daughters adopted in Russia, writes prolifically on aspects of special needs parenting. Her article lists the pros and cons of special needs camps and suggests questions parents should ask when selecting a summer camp.

<http://specialchildren.about.com/od/specialneedssummer-camps/a/choosecamp.htm>

Summer Computer Camp at Adaptive Technical Resource Center (ATRC)

By Nancy Sicchia

Adaptive Technical Resource Center, Univ. of Toronto - 2006

The author describes the ATRC summer camp for teens with disabilities at the University of Toronto. Now in its 12th year, the camp is designed for teens with mobility, sensory or learning disabilities. Campers are ages 13-19. Many of the campers, she notes, rely on AT devices such as alternative keyboards, trackballs, and screen savers in order to overcome computer access barriers. Writes Ms. Sicchia, "Many of these participants, despite their challenges, excelled in creating multimedia and enjoyed the opportunity to pursue their interests and explore their creativity through the hands-on task of creating their webpage." In fact, one of the participants, Michael Dzura, age 15, excelled in creating animation accompanied by audio for his website. She writes, "Michael uses a sip and puff device to control the computer and to create simple animations. Michael's website features a series of animations, including a 3-D simulation of a music video for singer Shania Twain's hit-song 'Party For Two.'"

<http://snow.utoronto.ca/snowkids/news/camp.htm>

Tips for Choosing a Summer Camp for the Child with Learning Disabilities

By Ann Cathcart

LD Online - 2006

In search of a positive learning environment for her own child, the author left her position as CEO of the Better Business Bureau in Colorado and Wyoming to establish The Learning Camp. Cathcart urges parents to consider the following factors in making their decisions about camps: type of camp program, mainstream or one that focuses on particular needs; camp size, camps range in size from 30-40 campers to more than 400; educational vs. recreational programs, many camps are purely recreational while others combine recreational and educational activities, although called "camp" these facilities have day-long instructional activities; location and facilities, camps in each

region of the US possess regional characteristics, i.e. there are many camps in the heavily populated east, fewer in the west, some camps are schools that convert to camps in the summer months; staff, a 1-4 counselor to camper ratio is preferred; and camp policies.

http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/parenting/camp_tips.html

Choosing a Camp or Summer Program

By Maxwell Schleifer

Eparent.com - 2005

The author offers basic information to parents of children with disabilities as they begin their search for a summer camp. He emphasizes that children should be involved in the planning process from the start. He writes, "Including the youngster in thinking about camp allows the child to experience the anticipation of the future, and feel some control over it. This also forces you, and the professionals who are helping you, to be clear in your expectations and objectives so you can communicate them clearly to your child." He adds, "Children with disabilities who may need help with eating, toileting, or dressing may be worried about how these needs will be met or whether they will be teased at camp. You may have similar concerns. Children usually feel relief when these concerns are discussed openly."

http://www.eparent.com/resources/directories/choosing_a_camp.htm

Ten Ways to Prevent Camp Tragedies

By Terri Mauro

Parenting and Family - 2006

For kids with disabilities, summer camp can be with an exhilarating or an exasperating experience. Ms. Mauro lists 10 ways to help ensure that the experience is one that children will remember for all the right reasons.

<http://specialchildren.about.com/od/inthecommunity/tp/safe-camp.htm>

About Special Needs Camps

www.KidsHealth.org - 2005

This article provides a nugget of insight that may prove crucial for any parent of a child with disabilities – and the child herself – in helping ensure a rich and successful summer experience. The author cautions, "If you and your child haven't had the opportunity to visit the camp, make sure you get as much literature about the camp as possible, including a description of the layout and a video if they have one. You and your child should go over these materials together. Tell her that you'll be checking in regularly with the camp staff to make sure that she has everything she needs and stress that she can always let the staff know if her needs aren't being met."

Talk to a child about her feelings, the author advises. "Find out if she has any concerns, and do your best to reassure her that you and the camp staff will take every precaution to make sure

she stays safe. You might find it helpful to talk about why she's attending camp and what some of her goals might be, such as to try a new sport, to make new friends, or to just enjoy a break from therapy sessions."

If a child is intimidated by the thought of attending a residential camp or inclusionary camp, parents might consider starting the child off in a day camp or a sports team for kids with special needs, the author counsels. "This step can give your child the skills and confidence he needs to feel comfortable about going to a residential camp."

<http://endoflifecare.tripod.com/juvenilehuntingtonsdisease/id41.html>

Choosing a Camp for a Child with Autism

By Bonnie Sayers

BellaOnline: The Voice for Women - 2004

The author provides information resources available to parents of children with autism – including funding opportunities – regarding summer camps in California.

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art33762.asp>

A Camping We Will Go: Summer Camp for Children with Disabilities

By Judith Lavin

Special Kids Today - 2006

The article features advice from parks and recreation officials nationwide who are in charge of organizing and administering summer camps for children with special needs.

<http://specialkidstoday.com/articles/2900.php?wcat=315>

Directories/Guides

Washington Summer Camps and Programs for Children with Special Needs

The Center for Children with Special Needs - 2006

This directory features summer camps or programs in Washington State for children with special needs and their siblings. Camps are listed alphabetically. The directory is produced by Children's Resource Center and the Center for Children with Special Needs at Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, Seattle, WA.

<http://www.cshcn.org/resources/campcalendar.cfm?intro=yes>

Summer Camps for Children with Disabilities

By Vincent Iannelli, M.D.

Parenting and Family - 2006

The author, a Dallas-based pediatrician and Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, has compiled a directory of summer camps for children with disabilities.

http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/parentingadvice/a/summer_camps.htm?terms=special%20needs%20summer%20camps

Therapy Respite Camps for Kids

By Will Moore

About.com - 2006

The author, a professor of political science at Florida State University, created this comprehensive nationwide listing of camps in honor of his late son, Kris, an autistic child who was diagnosed with infantile spasms -- a form of epilepsy -- and developmental delays. The site also lists camps by region.

<http://specialchildren.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=specialchildren&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.moore.net%2Ftherapy.html>

Fact Sheets

Summer Camps for Children with Physical Disabilities National Limb Loss Information Center

2005

This sheet features information on specific camps as well as a collection of guides, directories and other summer camp information resources.

http://www.amputee-coalition.org/fact_sheets/Kidscamps.html

Websites

Special Needs Camps - MySummerCamps.com

2006

The site provides links to disability-specific summer camps nationwide.

http://specialchildren.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=specialchildren&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mysummercamps.com%2Fcamps%2FSpecial_Needs_Camps%2F

LD In-Depth: Summer Programs - Learning Disabilities Online - 2006

This website offers a no-frills primer on summer camp -- as well as advice on selecting the appropriate summer school and extended school year programs -- for parents of children with learning disabilities. http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/summer/index.html

CampResource.com

2006

This summer camp resource site lists 72 special needs camps nationwide.

http://www.campresource.com/camps/spec_needs_camps.cfm

ADDResource.com

2006

This site lists numerous camps and schools nationwide that specialize in Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

<http://www.addresource.com/catsearch.adhd?category=10&sub=1&name=Schools+and+Camps>

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

Lions Camp Tatiyee

Lions Camp Tatiyee is operated by the Lions Clubs of Arizona, Multiple District 21. The camp serves the entire state of Arizona and operates on a first come, first serve basis. There is no fee for this camp and it is open to over 600 campers each season. The camp operates for a period of ten weeks each summer.



The facility has four dormitories, each has 8 staff members and as many as 20 campers. The dormitories are handicapped accessible. Their large dining hall includes a lounge area and the Graham Enrichment center, which is a one-on-one therapy room. Their recreation hall has a sound room, stage and craft room. An indoor swimming pool, a handicapped accessible playground, a ball field, a fishing pond, a camp store, and an infirmary are all located on the camp grounds.

Throughout the ten week session, the campers have the opportunity to participate in many programs. These programs include aquatics, fishing, arts and crafts, recreation, field sports, indoor sports, sign language, science, nature, drama, story telling, music, dance, cooking, camp-outs, water sports, mud-pit play, team-building, etc. The campers also venture off of the camp area and may do activities such as rock-climbing, karaoke, wilderness programs, etc.

The campers at Lions Camp Tatiyee range from age 7 through adulthood, with no age limit. Their sessions are divided by age and disability, with special sessions for people with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, multiple disabilities, and hearing impairments. The camps serves a range of disabilities, but due to facility limitations and rural area, they are unable to serve individuals with autism, communicable diseases, technologically dependent persons, or those with psychological, emotional or conduct disorders.

For more information on Lions Camp Tatiyee, please contact:
P.O. Box 6910
Mesa, AZ 85216
Phone: (580) 380-4254
Contact: Pam Swanson, Director
E-mail: lionscamp@cablcaz.com
<http://www.arizonalionscamp.com/default.asp>

Gallaudet University Sports Camp

The Gallaudet Sports Camps are designed for boys and girls age 10-18 who are deaf or who have hearing impairments. The camp functions in one week sessions and it provides campers with instruction to improve their playing skills and better understand the dynamics of each sport. The goal is for campers to leave the camps with improved athletic skills, having learned new things and making friends along the way.



Gallaudet models their camp programs around the belief that fostering an attitude of learning, fun and improvement is an integral part of achieving success on the field of play, in the classroom, and in life. Participants reside in air-conditioned residence halls, each dorm room housing two campers. The camp dates for each session can be found on their web site. According to Lynn Ray Boren, the camp coordinator, "Gallaudet Sports Camp is a great communication accessible for both deaf & hard of hearing campers and they will learn from the best!"

For more information on Gallaudet University's Sports Camp, please contact:

800 Florida Ave NE
Washington D.C. 20002-3695
TTY: (202) 651-6217
VRS: (202) 651-5047
Contact: Lynn Ray Boren, Coordinator
E-mail: Lynn.Boren@gallaudet.edu
<http://athletics.gallaudet.edu/camps.php>

Courage Camps

Courage Camps offer safe, accessible, natural environments where children and adults with physical disabilities, sensory and language impairments, and other disabilities or illnesses may discover abilities they never knew they had or they thought they had lost. The camp sessions they offer are divided; there are sessions for both children and adults with physical disabilities and sessions for children with speech, hearing, and language impairments.

Courage Camps offer summer camp programs at three separate locations: the Lakeside and Woodland campuses at Camp Courage, and at Courage North. Each camp features different programs aimed to serve a different audience.

The Lakeside Campus offers sessions for youth with physical disabilities, including a sports camp for children and teens. They also offer a college preview session, which

includes a computer camp. Camp sessions for adults with physical disabilities take place at the Lakeside Campus. The other sessions offered here focus on children with Muscular Dystrophy, adults with Multiple Sclerosis, children and teens with a history of cancer, children and teens with Sickle Cell Anemia, and people who use Augmentative Alternative Communication.

The Woodland Campus offers programs for youth with speech, hearing, and language impairments. They provide programs to enhance the campers' leadership and literacy skills. At this location, there is a camp offered for children with asthma and it is operated in cooperation with the American Lung Association.

Finally, their North Campus offers sessions for adults with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. They have leadership sessions for youth with hearing impairments. They also have services for children with hemophilia and Asperger's Syndrome.

For more information on Courage Camps, please contact:

3915 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN 55422
Phone: (763) 520-0504
Toll-free: (866) 520-0504
Fax: (763) 520-0577

<http://www.couragecamps.org/>

Contact: Dianne Casey

Email: camping@courage.org

Camp Nuhop

Camp Nuhop is located in southern

Ashland County, Ohio. It is a residential summer camp for all children with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders and behavior disorders. The camp serves 560 children during a six week time period each summer.

The camp's facilities include a large dining room and lodge, a smaller lodge used as a classroom, 10 cabins, 4 shower areas and a staff dormitory. The camp is surrounded by the Mohican Forest and Pleasant Hill Lake Park. At these sites, the campers can participate in boating, primitive camping, canoeing, tubing, and hiking.

Camp Nuhop offers a variety of programs for all ages. They have an Exploration Camp (ages 6-10), Wilderness Camp (ages 8-10), Intro to Sports (ages 8-10), Science Camp (ages 8-10), Discovery Camp (ages 11-13), Sport Skills Camp (ages 11-13), Acclimatization Camp (ages 11-13), Rails to Trails (ages 11-13), Artistic Camp (ages 11-13), Lake



Erie Islands (ages 12-16), Crusoe (ages 12-16), Aqua Camp (ages 12-16), Canoe Camp (ages 12-16), Lets Explore Ohio (ages 12-16), Mountain Bike Camp (ages 14-18), Caves and Climbing (ages 14-18), Backpack Camp (ages 14-18), Adventure Camp (ages 14-18) and Leadership Camp (ages 17-18). For the specifics on each of these camps please visit their website.

This camp is available to youth outside of Ohio and financial aid is available to help cover costs.

For more information on Camp Nuhop, please contact:

404 Hillcrest Drive
Ashland, OH 44805
Phone: (419) 289-2227
Fax: (419) 289-2227

<http://www.campnuhop.org/>

Camp Lee Mar

Camp Lee Mar is a highly structured program designed to help campers with mild to moderate developmental challenges thrive. They have an academic department, as well as a speech department. Their campers are involved in all the traditional camp activities, including basketball, volleyball, swimming, arts and crafts, drama and dance, etc., plus academics and speech (following the campers' Individual Education Plans), therapeutic horseback riding, and all kinds of wonderful evening activities - Karaoke, social dance, Olympics, campfires, etc.



Throughout the summer they have a variety of special events, including a 4th of July Celebration, Hawaiian Night, Western Night (horse-drawn hayrides), Founder's Day Celebration, Banquet and their most popular "Senior Fling" (Senior Prom). Their Executive Director, Andrew Segal believes that above all, the most important part of Lee Mar is their nurturing, mature staff. They have many staff that return year after year.

Camp Lee Mar is continually upgrading and improving upon their facilities. The entire camp, including the cabins, is air-conditioned. They have a beautiful amphitheater for shows and currently are building a new Gazebo (used for music, dance, etc.) that will be twice the size of their old one. A few years ago they expanded the size of their dining rooms (where all their meals are served family style by waiters and waitresses). They also have a wonderful trip program. Last summer they went to Canada for three days, the Amish Country and Hershey Park for two days, and their one day trip was to Knoebels Amusement Park.

A unique aspect of this camp is that their older campers can interview for a "job" at camp if they choose. This is just one period a day, but they must show up on time and complete their responsibilities. It contributes to their social and employment skills and builds their self-esteem at the same time. Many of their campers then are able to hold real jobs after their training at Lee Mar.

For more information on Camp Lee Mar, please contact:

805 Redgate Road
Dresher, PA 19025
Phone: (215) 658-1708
Fax: (215) 658-1710

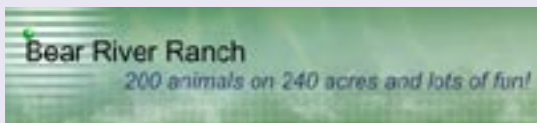
<http://www.leemar.com/>

Contact: Ariel J. Segal, MSW, LSW, Executive Director

Email: gtour400@aol.com

Bear River Ranch

Bear River Ranch is a 240 acre facility



nine miles north of Rolla, Missouri. The ranch has 8 modern air-conditioned cabins with semi-private bedrooms and a meeting room. Their ranch contains a swimming pool, archery range, animal room, camp fire ring, fishing pond, barn, pavilion, hiking trails, etc.

Bear River Ranch is the home of three co-ed summer camps for children with special needs. These camps are Camp Carpe Diem, Camp Black Hawk, and Cub Creek Science Camp.

Camp Carpe Diem is a camp specifically designed for individuals with high support needs (ages 7-70). They are able to assist with high levels of personal care, behavioral support as well as a variety of other support needs. They offer a variety of programs and each camper works with a staff member in a one-to-one or one-to-two ratio.

Camp Black Hawk is for children and adults with developmental disabilities. It offers all of the "typical" camp activities found in any summer camp program. Campers are grouped together based on their age and are then matched with a counselor. These small groups plan the activities that they will participate in throughout the session.

Finally, Cub Creek Science Camp is available for children and teens (ages 7-17) with special needs. It is an inclusive program, as not all of the children participating have a disability. The camp is open to any child with an interest in nature, science, and animals.

For more information on Bear River Ranch, please contact:

16795 Hwy E
Rolla, MO 65401
Phone: (573) 458-2125
Fax: (573) 458-2125

<http://www.bearriverranch.com/CampMain.html>

Contact: Lori Martin, Director

Email: Director@BearRiverRanch.com

SOAR



SOAR (Success Oriented Achievement Realized) features success-oriented, high adventure programs for preteens, teens and adults with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit/ Hyperactive Disorder. Throughout the camp, they place an emphasis on making sure the campers develop self-confidence, social skills, problem-solving techniques, a willingness to attempt new challenges and the motivation which comes through successful goal orientation.

Students participating in SOAR's summer camps take part in adventure experiences as diverse as camping, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, SCUBA diving, sea kayaking, and horse-back riding. Their camps are offered through the United States. They have a location in North Carolina, California, Wyoming, Florida, and a different special place that has yet to be determined.

For more information on SOAR, please contact:

P.O. Box 388
Balsam, NC 28707-0388
Phone: (828) 456-3435
Fax: (828) 456-3449

<http://www.soarwy.org/>

Contact: Jonathon Jones, Executive Director

Email: jonathan@soarnrc.org

Frontier Travel Camp, Inc.

Frontier Travel Camp is a summer camp alternative for individuals with special needs. They offer various trips throughout the world for these individuals. Their belief is that "group travel is an ideal way to experience independence, improve social skills, and increase self-esteem in a secure and exciting environment."



In order to participate in this program, and individual must be between the ages of 15-35. Campers who participate in this program have varying learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, and/or other difficulties requiring special attention.

Frontier Travel Camp has traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada, including Hawaii and Alaska. On these trips, they hike, raft, canoe, and explore cities and national parks. The hope is that participants leave not only with priceless memories, but also feeling more independent, confident in their ability to make friends, and proud of their efforts to challenge themselves and try new things.

During summer 2006, the trips Frontier Travel Camp plans to embark on are a three week tour of Eastern Canada, a two week excursion in Italy, and a five week trip that would include both.

For more information on Frontier Travel Camp, please contact:

1000 Quayside Terrace #904
Miami Shores, FL 33138
Phone: (305) 895-1123
Toll-free: (866) 750-2267
Fax: (305) 893-4169

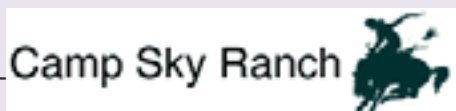
<http://www.frontiertravelcamp.com/>

Contact: Scott Fineman, Director

Email: info@frontiertravelcamp.com

Camp Sky Ranch

Camp Sky Ranch has been serving people with disabilities since 1948.



It is located on 145 acres of forested land in Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. At Camp Sky Ranch, campers can enjoy a fun-filled camping experience. They offer varied activities so that the campers can easily make friends, feel accepted, build skills, and enhance self-confidence.

This camp is geared towards serving individuals of all ages who have developmental disabilities or mental health impairments from all over the world. Campers attending this camp will receive individual attention and encouragement as the staff-to-camper ratio is 1-4.

Daily activities offered at Camp Sky Ranch include: arts and crafts, kickball, cookouts, boating softball, archery, horseback riding, fishing, field games, nature, volleyball, music, swimming, and hiking. They also offer out-of-camp activities to Tweetsie Railroad and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

While at Camp Sky Ranch, campers reside in cabins that consist of bunk beds and plenty of storage space. Campers eat their meals at the dining facility. Finally, for the safety of the campers, there is a qualified nurse on the grounds of this camp if problems may arise.

For more information on Camp Sky Ranch, please contact:

634 Sky Ranch Road
Blowing Rock, NC 28605-9738
Phone: (828) 264-8600
Fax: (828) 265-2339

<http://www.campskyranch.com/>

Contact: Jack and Betty Sharp, Directors

Email: jsharp1@triad.rr.com

Camp Carter USA

For over 50 years, Camp Carter has served the residents of North Texas with outdoor programming. In the summer months, they offer a camp that is directed towards children ages 6-12 who are blind or visually impaired.



Camp Can-Do is a week of day camp. Professionals in the field of visual impairment, orientation and mobility lead the special week with assistance from trained adult and youth volunteers.

Activities throughout the week are planned so that the campers can use all of their senses to enjoy all of their natural surroundings, make new friends, improve communication skills, and learn new things. Campers participate in swimming, archery, canoeing, horseback riding, arts and crafts, and nature study.

This year, the dates for Camp Can-Do are June 19-23. The camp runs from 8:30-4:30 Monday through Friday. Supervised extended care before and after camp hours is offered. Lunch and snacks are provided at no extra cost.

For more information on Camp Carter USA, please contact:

6200 Sand Springs Rd.
Fort Worth, TX 76114
Phone: (817) 738-9241
Fax: (817) 731-1673

http://owners.bunk1.com/template/tour_pics.asp?form_tour_id=1131&form_camp_id=7012

Contact: Laurie Johnston, Camp Director

Email: acoulson@ymcafw.org

CAGLEWOOD, Inc.

Caglewood provides services for children and adults with special needs and developmental disabilities. Their goal is to help empower them to experience and grow in their lives.



They offer two types of programs all year round. Weekend camping trips are overnight trips to places all over Georgia, where they sleep in either tents or cabins. Day trips are one day adventures that are most commonly offered on weekends.

This summer they have some great trips planned. From July 8-9, they are taking a weekend trip to the Appalachian Trail and Len Foote Inn. On July 30th there is a great day trip to see a Braves Game. Finally from August 25-27 there is an overnight trip to Simpsonwood and Bowling.

Caglewood's programs are good for children and adults who want to have the camping experience, but not be ready for a full summer or week-long camp. These short trips allow them to get away from their everyday environments and experience something new with caring people and their peers.

For more information on Caglewood, please contact:

455 Friars Head Drive

Suwanee, GA 30024

Phone: (770) 402-9355

Fax: (770) 402-3406

<http://www.caglewood.org/>

Contact: Paul Freeman

Email: info@caglewood.org



Family Center
on Technology
and Disability

www.fctd.info

THE FCTD ONLINE DISCUSSION OF:

AT Issues During Times of Transition

APRIL 1 - APRIL 30, 2006

Please join

Mary Morningstar, Ph.D.

Transition Coalition, University of Kansas, Dept. of Special Education
and

Sean Smith, Ph.D.,

Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Kansas

as they lead the FCTD discussion of
AT Issues During Times of Transition.

These knowledgeable professionals will share with you their considerable experience and will respond to your questions and comments. Share your questions, knowledge and experiences and interact with colleagues in the field.

We want to hear from you.

There is no cost, no registration, no prior knowledge required.

Simply log on to www.fctd.info and click on the link to the discussion to participate.

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