

Summer Camp 2007: Anything You Can Do... They Can Do Too



In this Issue...

Through the years a new way of camping has evolved for children with special needs and their families, a way that emphasizes a child's abilities over his or her disabilities, a way that not only accommodates assistive technology but is dependent on it, along with other factors, to ensure a summer of rich experience.

Yes, many special needs campers have capabilities that are limited, but those limitations, thanks to well-trained counselors and experienced staff administrators, no longer prevent campers from engaging in traditional mainstream camp activities such as rope climbing, softball and even swimming, to name just a few. As camp director Bernie Kosberg says, "Some of the kids may not have a spoken language, but they can follow directions. They can understand sign language. They can use writing boards and Velcro board. They do amazingly well in camp activities."

A key to a child's camp success, however, is in the hands of parents, who can and should provide a camp with an accurate appraisal of a child's physical, cognitive and emotional limitations along with information about the child's AT. For camp directors, there's no such thing as too much information.

This issue examines the evolution of summer camp for children

with disabilities, the level of training achieved by contemporary camp counselors and staff and the role of assistive technology in the camp experience.

Bernie Kosberg Speaks

Bernie Kosberg came to special needs camping nearly 30 years ago after an early stint in a residential treatment facility where he worked closely with troubled and at-risk children in a leadership capacity. For the past 20 years he has served as executive director of Ramapo for Children, an 85-year-old non-profit umbrella organization that includes Camp Ramapo and serves more than 1,700 special needs and at-risk children in the New York City metropolitan area.

Camp Ramapo, which also serves as a training facility for students and teachers considering careers in special education, serves children ages 4-16 with a range of emotional and learning problems in a natural outdoor environment. The camp consists of three summer programs: Early Adventure, which provides fragile and disadvantaged children ages 4-6 a therapeutic, educational, social and recreational framework that prepares them to enter school in the fall; Summer Adventure, for campers age 7-14, which emphasizes trust and

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confidence building activities; Teen Leadership, which is designed to build healthy relationships, promote discipline, self-reflection and a proactive attitude.

Another Ramapo for Children franchise, Ramapo Training, provides staff training and program support for educational and recreation programs serving at-risk and special needs children.

Bernie holds advanced degrees in special education, educational administration and non-profit management.

Supporting our interview with Bernie Kosgrove are resources to assist parents and others in finding the most appropriate camp for their children with disabilities. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of the special needs summer camp experience, including the role of assistive technology. 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.

There's still a few days left to participate in the FCTD online discussion of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Vocabulary Selection!

This month's discussion has provided a wonderful forum for knowledge exchange. Here are some of the questions that have been discussed so far in this lively and informative discussion.

- How do you define "core vocabulary" for a child using an AAC device?
- What kind of framework do we provide on a dynamic display device? Do we color code?
- How do we make decisions about using quick responses for social interaction versus providing vocabulary for creating novel phrases?
- How do we go about teaching children the layout of the device and the appropriate context to use it?

To join the discussion.... Simply log in at <http://www.fctd.info/webboard/index.php>.

Remember, there's still time to participate!

Summer Camp 2007: "We Can Work with Your Child"

An Interview with Bernie Kosberg, Executive Director, Ramapo for Children

"If I'm a parent of a child with special needs, I'm going to seek out a summer camp that listens to me and tells me, 'We can work with your child.'"



Bernie Kosberg

The caveat for parents, Bernie Kosberg cautions, is that parental frankness about a child's needs and issues is a must. He adds, "As a parent, I'm going to be very honest about who my child is in terms of the behaviors that are easy to manage and those that are more difficult to manage and the idiosyncrasies my child demonstrates."

Parents, he declares, "must provide a camp with an accurate picture of the child who will be in their charge so that the camp can tell the parent whether or not it has the capability to deal with those behaviors."

Regrettably, Bernie continues, "Some parents fear that if they're too frank about their child's limitations and behaviors, a camp will reject their child as too difficult to manage. In these cases, he alleges, some parents shelter information. "But camps need that information in order to take the steps necessary to ensure that a child's camp experience will be rich and positive."

Look for Structure – and Diversity

He strongly recommends that parents of kids with disabilities look for a camp that is "very, very structured, very well organized, very predictable, a camp that acknowledges that it works with kids with special needs and can describe in detail what it does for these kids."



If he had a child with disabilities, he says, "I'd look for a camp that doesn't have all of one kind of child, a camp that deals with kids with a wide variety of special needs. I'd want to get as much typical behavior as possible demonstrated between kids."

For example, he adds, "If I have a child with high functioning autism, I want that child to be with kids with disabilities different from his/hers. They may have learning disabilities or have had a catastrophic incident in their lives that they need to get over. They

may be very fragile kids who require a lot of caring and structure, but they have special needs.”

The Goal: To Learn “Typical” Behavior

Diversity, he adds, helps children learn “typical” behavior from other children who do not share their disability.

The reality, Bernie explains, “is that most children demonstrate atypical behaviors only about 5% of the time. However, when six or seven children are put together in a cabin, that 5% can seem like a much larger percentage even though it’s not.”

According to Bernie, “It appears that that atypical behavior is recurring constantly. It’s not, though, because kids do not have exceptional needs all the time. Or those that do are very few.”

The idea, he says, “is to put a child in an environment that is as inclusive as possible, so that if there are kids with special needs, the inclusiveness of the environment will enhance their ability to learn positive behaviors.”

Finding such an environment is dependent upon parents’ ability to locate a communicative camp. Says Bernie, “Parents should look for a camp that communicates with them, shares information and will phone if there are questions.”

He adds, “Parents should also want a camp that takes ownership of the child and does not expect parents to manage a child’s behavior via the telephone or camp visits.” In short, he concludes, “Parents of special needs kids need a camp that is quite competent at managing behavior.”

The Benefits of Just Hanging Out

Bernie recommends hanging out as an effective strategy when it comes to searching for the best available summer camp for their child. Such a search, he advises, ought to commence a full year before their child’s attendance.



“The reason for the long lead time is that parents should visit a prospective camp when campers are there, because parents can learn how these camps function only when there are kids in attendance, and when a parent can sit down on a bench at the camp and just hang out for a half hour taking in the scene.”

That bench, he says, “is often the best vantage point for observing how the counselors relate to the kids, how the kids relate to each other, how campers move about the camp, how much supervision

is available.”

It’s easy for parents to acquire counselor-to-camper ratios for camps, he insists. But the best way to learn whether or not that stated ratio is actually adhered to is to observe campers and counselors in their habitat. “Count campers and counselors,” he recommends. “Is the ratio of campers to counselors the same as the one about which you’ve been informed?”

The opportunity to have a first-hand look at the camp is important, Bernie notes, “and a year’s lead time is about right.”

Fewer Special Needs Camps But Camping Opportunities Abound

With the passage of federal legislation and a marked increase in recognition and accommodation for children with special needs, one might assume that camps dedicated to children with disabilities would have proliferated in order to keep pace. Such an assumption, Bernie asserts, would be erroneous. Yet camping opportunities for special needs kids have in fact increased. Bernie explains this paradoxical evolution.

“I came out of the residential treatment profession in which I was the associate director of a very well known and highly regarded residential treatment center. I was drawn into this because at that time camps for kids with special needs were seen as a very selective information-based endeavor. You needed to have experience and a frame of reference and a fund of information to run a program.”

Over the past 10 years or so, he adds, that has not changed much. “What has happened, however, is that there are many more teachers who are being trained in special education and who work in special ed. When they get summer jobs -- and the summer job might be in a mainstream camp -- that camp suddenly has the capacity to work with some special needs kids because the facility now has well-trained special needs staff. Consequently, there are more ‘regular’ camps that are accepting campers with special needs than ever before, albeit on a small-scale basis.”

In terms of camps that work exclusively with special needs kids, “I’d say there are fewer of those than ever, because camps that work exclusively with kids with disabilities tend to burn themselves out due to the difficulty in hiring staff. It’s also difficult to obtain needed funding, because these camps are very expensive to operate. It’s difficult, too, to organize a facility to serve special needs kids because there is a constant need to have a camp running at such a high level of performance in terms of building and grounds maintenance and activities -- and it is just too expensive.”

There are fewer camps dedicated exclusively to special needs

campers “but the upside is that there is much more mainstreaming.”

“Our Kids Climb the High Ropes!” – and AT helps

The advent of assistive technology has contributed to the camps’ evolving emphasis during the past 10 years, Bernie says. “The offerings today are much more cognizant of kids’ abilities as opposed to their disabilities. Our kids climb the high ropes! We have campers whose abilities are very limited but they can climb those high ropes. They have no spoken language but they can climb! They can follow directions. They can understand sign language. They can use their writing boards and Velcro boards. They do amazingly well.”

“If kids with special needs are in front of a computer they can communicate in the language of the computer. This level of communication was not expected of special needs kids at camps in other eras because these kids back then were considered to be very limited. Now they’re considered limited within a specific communications mode as opposed to being regarded as generally limited.”

“You can have a youngster with no verbal language but plenty of written language and great cognitive skills. There’s no reason that those kids can’t do pretty much everything.”

Providing Relationship-Building Skills

Camps like Ramapo specialize in helping campers develop relationship-building skills. “Many of these campers are really lonely children,” Bernie notes.

“For them, their special needs can make for a lonely life. Often it’s also an embarrassing life.”



“Many of these kids are very aware of their limitations,” he adds. “They know they have emotional problems. They know they have behavioral problems. Those that have diseases are aware of what they have. Camp gives all these kids the opportunity to make friends, not only with other campers but also with counselors. They begin to see adults as caring, kind, warm and giving, people with whom they can make a connection.”

Speaking of his camp, Bernie says, “Because of the structure of the Ramapo experience and because of the absence of tension around the experience, in which academics are not a major ingredient, kids can begin to relax and just learn how to make friends with many different kinds of kids and with different kinds of staff. The kids feel more comfortable in this environment, which focuses much more on social skills and structure than on academic instruction.”

Children with special needs “fail psychologically when it comes to attention-to-task behavior that relates to academics,” he adds. “That’s because there’s so much tension involved and they are always behind the curve because they have secondary problems.”

In a recreation environment, however, “they are much more comfortable and can catch up faster – and they can recreate. Also, they are not a threat to a regular population. That’s one of the reasons to include special needs kids in mainstream populations, because they are not a threat to the other kids and, in fact, the other campers tend to take care of and watch out for those with special needs.”

Such comfort and mutual support, he emphasizes, occur only if encouraged by a camp’s culture. Explains Bernie, “The culture of a camp must establish that these kids are a valuable and important part of the community. In fact, settings which permit the making fun of special needs campers, and which promote their isolation and stigmatization, create a perennial sense of competition amongst all campers.”

“If a negative culture is permitted to breathe, then the benefits of mainstreaming will not be realized. Much of a camp’s success in achieving a supportive environment relies on the camp’s leadership in terms of setting boundaries and expectations for campers and staff.”

A Hothouse for Independence

A supportive camp environment is a hothouse for independence among campers with disabilities, Bernie asserts.

“One reason is that some parents of children with special needs can be somewhat overprotective. Especially in a residential facility, the child is here; the parents are not. At camp, kids have to learn how to eat on their own, among other daily tasks.

“Camps have a responsibility to teach the children who require the instruction how to eat on their own, how to eat with utensils, how to eat new foods, how to socialize at a meal, how to remain seated.”

“At home, many of these kids eat in front of the TV. Here at camp it’s family style dining. These are all important life skills – and all, if the camp culture is right, can be learned at camp. Other skills include dressing oneself, ambulating from one location to another, following directions, learning the essential elements of a conversation, following directions in terms of activities, and also trying new activities.”

“A child has to learn how to fail successfully in activities without exploding or becoming so frustrated that he/she becomes depressed or isolated. They learn all of this in a regular camp – plus they

learn how to swim! They learn how to attend a campfire and roast marshmallows, how to make their beds. And they learn how to do all of this on their own. This increased independence also pertains to their use of assistive technology.”

Campers with disabilities support each other in their attempts to achieve independence and social success, Bernie notes. “They support each other by proximity. They are around each other all day every day. They eat together, sleep in the same cabins. They communicate through many different means. They participate in many activities together.”

No Profile for Camp Staff Trainees

Ramapo does not match prospective camp staff trainees with a pre-existing profile, Bernie says. “We don’t look for specific traits or backgrounds. We look for people who are eager to work with children with special needs. We offer a couple of college courses here: a six-credit college course, an internship on working with kids with special needs; and a college level course focused on managing behavior. These courses attract a lot of counselor candidates to Ramapo.”

The median staffer age is around 19, with age range of 17-26. The older staffers are going for their teaching degree or a Masters or perhaps they’ve just started teaching and they are trying to decide if they want to focus on special education.

We are one of very few camps in the U.S. that work primarily with American staff. We have very few foreign staff. Given that the type of child Ramapo works with often has significant learning problems in addition to other difficulties, it is important that the counselor’s means of communication, such as language and gestures, for example, are not an obstacle to relationship development.”

“We offer just about the lowest salaries around. We’ve made ourselves into a training site where counselors come to train to work with special needs kids. They’re getting an opportunity to see if working with children with disabilities is a career they want to pursue. They can earn as few as two credits during the summer or as many as six credits. Although our counselors do not make a lot of money, they get a chance to gain the experience to help them decide if this is a career for them.”

Counselors are also provided ongoing training, he adds. “They get a comprehensive week of intensive training before the camp begins. There are at least three opportunities during each week of the camp season to receive professional training focused on meeting the needs of the children they serve and in teambuilding, the most important activity that goes on in a communal environment.”

The Hardest Lesson: Teambuilding

Staff burn-out, when it occurs, cannot be blamed on special needs campers and their occasionally “difficult behaviors,” Bernie explains. “Counselors usually burn out because they don’t learn to work as part of a team.”

“They’ve never learned to share values, standards and expectations. But because of the nature of the kids they’re working with, counselors need to be on the same page and to have common goals and expectations, or else the counselors’ decisions can confuse these kids who have to be very carefully managed. That might be the hardest part of a counselor’s job when working with special needs campers.”

“After two or three weeks counselors become aware that not only are they acquiring a fount of information in terms of how to work with children with disabilities, they are also learning a great deal about themselves: who they are as individuals; who they are as a member of a team; and whether their team has a clear purpose and common agenda..”

250 Staffers Hired Annually

Ramapo starts its staff recruiting process in February. “Our aim each year is to hire about 250 staff. About 100 staff members return each year. Perhaps 40-50 of the returnees will come back to us as supervisors, another 40-50 will return as counselors. About three-fifths of our staff is new each year.”

“The reason we hire so many new staff is that turnover and job mobility are now part of the larger culture. Another reason is that we view Ramapo as a training site. If counselors want to come back after having been with us, that’s great. We then elevate them through the stages. They begin as a counselor, then become a team leader, head counselor and then possibly a program director if they remain with us long enough.”

“We train our own summer staff, and we train them well! Camp Ramapo is part of a larger organization, Ramapo for Children, which provides professional development workshops and on-going “coaching” services to many schools and community based organizations which serve typical children and those with special needs. Our specialty is teaching both new and experienced staff effective strategies for managing difficult behavior. We also are known for our workshops on supervision, and creating a culture of inclusion. We contract with the New York City Department of Education, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), which administers New York City’s public after-school and summer programs, many private schools, residential programs, and community based organizations. Ramapo also is known for its school-year adventure based learning programs and for its teen leadership programs which focus on children with special needs.

“Right now we have six trainers. Most are social workers or educators who have worked as teachers or program leaders, and are committed to helping staff do their best.”

“In our trainers we look for someone who is eager to collaborate and to help a colleague learn and grow. We are invested in promoting willingness, effort and enthusiasm. We also focus on cognitive decision-making, e.g., How do I make decisions, how can I better problem solve so that I can be a better teacher or a better organizer, a better structuralist? Cognitive reflection is one of the major aspects of our ongoing training.”

Providing a Camper's AT Information: Parents Can Help

Ramapo staffers not already familiar with AT devices receive instruction on the equipment from qualified professionals recruited to help train staff.

Adds Bernie, “We also help produce social skills books for which we print schedules and organize charts using Velcro and AT-type similar aids. We don't necessarily get staff here that are familiar with AT. Much of that training goes on here, but counselors take to it very quickly and the knowledge they acquire about assisted instruction is invaluable.”

In Bernie's opinion, staff training in the use of AT should occur before camp starts and can be obtained from many sources. “The staff who do well with kids who use AT are those who have received sufficient information from parents who have helped the staff put into perspective how these assistive instructional resources and equipment can be used to their best advantage. Sometimes parents will write several pages of notes, providing us with information about their children and offering tips and advice. Parents who make this effort earn our gratitude and, their children are better at adjusting to the program.”

The most important thing a parent of a special needs camper can do is to give us a number where we can reach them when we need their advice or more information.. Especially in a camp environment, parents know their kids and know their technology. We don't. So if there is a problem, if something interferes with the technology, we can just call the parent and allow them to tell us how to fix and resolve the problem.

“Whatever AT information parents can provide is tremendously helpful, because without sufficient information we are left on our own to struggle as best we can. It behooves parents of campers to make detailed information available to us well before their child arrives at camp. Giving it to us during the camp season, when everything is in motion, won't help us much.”

“About 50-60% of the parents we deal with are terrific in this regard. They prepare us in writing and in person. The other 40% provide us with little or no information and then expect us to instinctively understand their kids and how to manage them. That is not the optimum approach for our staff, given their youthfulness and, for many, lack of hands-on experience.”

“It is critical – I can't overemphasize this – for parents to write us to explain what it is that a counselor can do in different types of situations to help communicate with the kids and to get the best out of them. It's a great idea to make an appointment to come up and visit the camp a couple of weeks or a month before camp starts and review their child's information with us.”

Some campers bring aides to camp. Ramapo accommodates these aides. “If a youngster brings an aide to camp who is comforting and instructive and who facilitates communication, that is terrific with us. We train ourselves to make the most of their talent.”

An Emerging Trend: the Professionalization of Camping

“Because of the numerous professional approaches brought to the field of special education over the last 20 years and the far greater knowledge parents now have, there is a much greater need to professionalize camping,” Bernie notes. “It is a need that has benefited camping. Camping is much more organized than ever before, programs are more predictable, the expectations of camps are much higher in terms of relationship building and activity involvement.”

“There's no reason why these kids can't play baseball or climb high ropes, swim or kyack or ride horses. They can do anything. What they need is more instruction and a higher level of supervision.”



Camps that focus on a culture of caring and on providing safe havens, Bernie explains, “are very effective for children with special needs because the expectations and standards are reassuring and inspiring.”

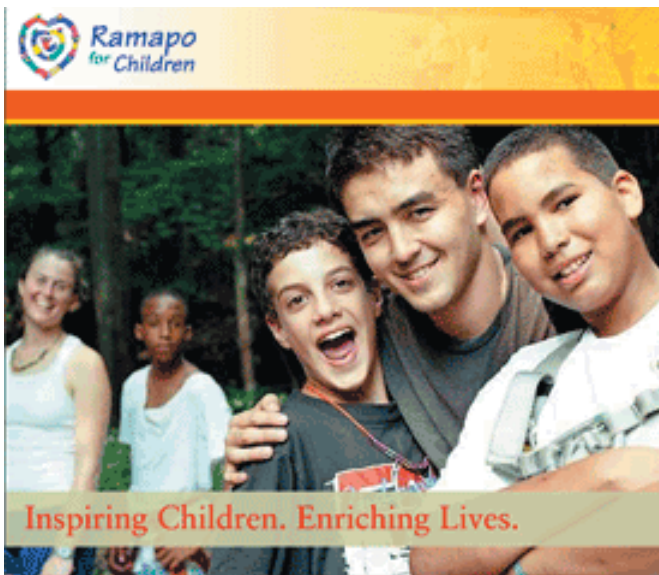
All in all, he says, he is pleased with the evolution of the special needs camping experience and is especially pleased by the growing cooperation between parents of children with special needs and camp staff.

The lone downside, he says, is the occasional failure of a camper to thrive. “Sometimes there are kids who are too difficult for our counselors to manage because of eruptive behavior. There are times, not often, when there are kids with special needs who we just cannot reach, for whatever reason. Sometimes being away in a

strange environment is just too frightening for the child. Sometimes it's the proximity to other kids that causes fear. Sometimes it's a building that causes discomfort."

There are kids who just cannot tolerate the camp experience. When those instances occur it is very difficult for us because we have a young staff who are very eager to meet the kids' needs and make them happy. When they see a child who is struggling for control - angry, aggressive, and/or disruptive - we know that kid is probably better off not in a camp. Although it's great to give parents several weeks respite when their child is with us, it isn't good for the staff nor for a child who is unhappy to be in such pain. To the parents of these children who are unable to adjust, sadly it's another frustration in a life which often has too many frustrations."

Teambuilding, again, has decreased the instances of failure. "We stress teambuilding among our staff," he concludes, "but equally vital to the success of a child's camping experience is the teamwork that must exist between a camp and parents. Parents should provide us with as much information as possible. To us, there's no such thing as too much information."



<http://www.ramapoforchildren.org/html/home.htm>

RESOURCES

Articles

Choosing a Summer Camp

This article is an interview with Ann Cathcart, the director and founder of The Learning Camp, Vail, CO. According to Cathcart, parents seeking a summer camp for their child with disabilities should decide whether they want an academic program, a recreational program or a mix of the two. Says Cathcart, "Many children with learning disabilities have problems with regressing if they don't receive any academic stimulus over the summer. There are many camps out there that include an academic component, though the mix between academics and recreational activities varies." She advised parents to discuss a child's summer plans with his/her teacher." In scouting out a camp, she recommends a parent include a lengthy discussion with the camp director. "Ask about the ratio of campers to staff. Ask how they handle children's medications. Ask where the children will be sleeping and will there be adults in the cabins or close by? The ratio of campers to counselors is particularly important, especially with the LD community. The American Camping Association recommends one counselor for eight kids, though my recommendation for camps for kids with LD is no more than four children to a counselor, and 1:3 or 1:2 is preferred."

The most important question overall, she notes, "is whether or not your child and your child's needs are going to be understood by the staff at the camp. You can't ask that question straight out to the director, but ask enough questions so that you're satisfied they have the understanding, patience and experience to work with your child's special needs. Also, summer camp is for the child, and whatever type of summer camp a parent chooses, the focus should be on enhancing the child's self-esteem and independence and, above all, having fun." _

http://www.ucp.org/ucp_channel.doc.cfm/1/15/63/63-63/4536

Finding a Camp for Your Child with Special Needs

Reviewed by Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph, MD

KidsHealth for Parents - 2004

"When it comes to camps, children with special needs actually have as many choices as children who have no such needs," the author writes. Within the available camp categories, she adds, "You'll have even more choices to consider in terms of duration, philosophy, and cost. There are nonprofit and for-profit camps, religious camps, camps run by national organizations, private camps, day camps, camps that run weekend sessions, and sleepover camps that accept kids for the entire summer." She advocates list-making as a way to establish the basics parents are looking for: a list of goals, a list of caretaking priorities, and a list of other requirements, such as cost.

Parents, she notes, also need to figure out which type of camp might best suit their child:

- Inclusionary (mainstream) camps
- Camps for kids with a specific special need
- General special-needs camps

"When trying to find the right type of camp for your child, consider whether your child has ever been away from home, for the weekend or even longer, and what experiences your child has had that might help prepare him or her for camp. This will help you to decide not only the type of camp, but whether your child is ready for a day camp or a sleepover (residential) camp."

http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/system/ill/finding_camp_special_needs.html

Sending Your Child with Special Needs to Camp

Reviewed by Steven Bachrach, MD

KidsHealth for Parents - 2004

"If 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 the camp has one," writes the author. "You and your child should go over these materials together. Tell your child that you'll be checking in regularly with the camp staff and stress that he or she can always let the staff know if his or her needs aren't being met."

He adds, "If your child is intimidated by the thought of attending a residential camp or an inclusionary camp, you might consider starting him or her off in a day camp or a sports team for kids with special needs. This step can give your child the skills and confidence he or she needs to feel comfortable about going to a residential camp. Start with regular sports activities and day camp. Then use a special-needs camp to get your child used to being away before sending your child to an inclusionary camp."

Close communication between parents and camp staff helps ensure a rewarding summer experience for a special needs child, he explains. "You can help educate the staff by spending time with them and answering and asking questions before you drop off your child. This can be critical. For example, if your child will be attending a mainstream camp, you'll want to make sure that everything is accessible for your child and that the staff understands your child's needs."

http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/travel/sending_child_camp.html

How to...Find a Camp for Your Special Needs Child

By Elizabeth Johnson

Our Special Kids - 2007

This article begins by looking at the various types of camps available, including day camps, special needs resident camps and mainstream resident camps. Johnson provides examples of

each camp type and describes the salient characteristics of each. The section that specifically focuses on how to choose the right camp contains a checklist of things parents should consider when choosing a camp. The author discusses her personal experience with finding the right camp for her son. She points out that a good camp is one that a child will want to return to the following summer. http://www.ourspecialkids.com/a_summercamp_042006.htm

Choosing the Right Summer Camp

By Terri Mauro

About: Parenting Special Needs - 2007

The author investigates three possible options for summer activities for a child with special needs. First, she looks at special needs camps in general, with emphasis on pros, cons and possible questions. Second, she examines community camps, also outlining pros, cons and possible questions. Finally, Mauro discusses the possibility of a parent staying home with the child and engaging in recreational activities.

<http://specialchildren.about.com/od/specialneedssummercamps/a/choosecamp.htm>

Fact Sheets

Selecting an Accessible Camp

Easter Seals

Compiled by an Easter Seals camp director, this document provides a list of tips that can help parents through the camp selection process.

http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_accessible_camp

Websites

American Camp Association

This searchable database is sponsored by the American Camp Association. It provides multiple searchable categories to allow users to find a camp that would best suit their individual needs. The categories available for searching include: specialty clientele, disability, day or residential camp preference, gender preferences, cost, location, lengths of sessions and age of camper.

http://find.acacamps.org/finding_special_needs.php

KidsCamps.com

The Kids Camps website allows users to search nationwide for summer camps for individuals with special needs. They first sort camps by disability type, then by location and activity type. Contact information and a brief description of each camp is provided.

<http://www.kidscamps.com/specialneeds-camps.camp>

Very Special Camps

Very Special Camps is an online resource for summer camp programs. The site provides an interactive camp search feature that allows users to locate disability-specific camps. This searchable database also provides information about camp activities.

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

Discover Camp

Discover Camp is a resource for both camp selection and preparation. In addition to helping parents and children prepare for the camp experience, the site also provides information about what to expect after camp is over. Preparation information includes pre-camp events offered by camps and instructions about how best to complete the registration process. <http://www.ncaonline.org/discover/>

Directories

Easter Seals: Nationwide Directory of Day and Residential Camps

Easter Seals offers camping and recreation programs for children, adults and families of all abilities. This directory includes day and residential camps nationwide along with the corresponding contact information.

http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_directory_camprec

CampResources.com

This website facilitates a camp search by special needs category. The site's "Canteen" feature connects the users to vendors specializing in camp-related needs.

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

Summer Camps for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University compiled this list of summer camps for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. The list identifies camps, family learning vacations and remedial clinics. Some of the programs are designed for the entire family. The directory contains an updated list of camps and programs available for summer 2007.

<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/InfoToGo/142.html>

SchwabLearning: Camps for Individuals with Learning Disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD

SchwabLearning provides a list of summer camps for individuals with learning disabilities or ADD/ADHD. A state-by-state search mechanism is available. <http://www.schwablearning.org/camp/index.asp>

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

Dimensions Kids Camp

Established in 2002, Dimensions Achievements in Therapy offers



comprehensive diagnostic services and treatment for individuals with communication challenges, oral-motor dysfunction and feeding disorders. The day camp is run by licensed occupational, speech and physical therapists in collaboration with teachers specializing in pediatrics, and is accredited by the American Camping Association.

Dimensions Kids Camp provides its campers with a distinctive format that is designed to promote creativity, enhance socialization and language, encourage cognitive skill development, improve motor and perceptual skill development, and to promote self-esteem. All campers participate in a variety of activities including horse-assisted activities, aquatics, arts and crafts, cooking, music therapy, interactive sports, and weekly field trips.

To learn more about this program, please contact:

Dimensions Achievements in Therapy

Aventura Office

20704 West Dixie Highway

Aventura, Florida 33180

Main Office: 305.933.5887

Fax: 305.933.8991

<http://www.dimensionstherapy.com/camp.html>

Camp Talk 2

Camp Talk 2U is a program run by Southwest Human Development. For twenty-five years Southwest Human Development has reached out to children and families in Arizona with comprehensive and innovative early childhood services. The Camp Talk 2U program provides children and youth who are unable to speak due to their disabilities with a unique opportunity to improve their communication skills. The goal of the camp is to improve children's communication skills, which in turn helps to develop independence, decrease social isolation and increase self-esteem.

Program staff feel that the magnitude of communication and learning that often takes place during four sequential days at summer camp enables young people to make great strides in their understanding of the power of communication. Campers learn new vocabulary, new strategies for implementing that vocabulary, and new ideas about what they can say. They begin to realize that communication is fun, as well as useful.

Dates, activities, and location change every year. For more information on Camp Talk 2U, contact: Deanna Wagner at (602) 266-5976 or dwagner@swhd.org. <http://www.swhdat.org/support2.html>

Camp Lighthouse Technology Camp (CLTC)

July 23 - July 27, 2007

Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB), established in 1900, offers programs that enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to obtain and maintain independence at home, school, work, and in the community. The organization hosts two summer camp programs – Camp Lighthouse Technology Camp (CLTC) and Camp Lighthouse Day Camp. Both of these programs encourage children and youth to develop new skills and expand their horizons.



Camp Lighthouse Day Camp enables children to try new experiences while learning to accommodate their vision loss. Activities offered for campers include instruction in Braille and literacy, science and nature, computers and technology, arts and culture, independent living skills, fitness and recreation. Activities aim to reinforce skills and knowledge acquired during the previous school year. Campers also participate in field trips and recreational activities such as swimming, soccer, and beepball.

Camp Lighthouse Technology Camp (CLTC) focuses on technology skills and applications that make students more competitive at school and later in college or in the workplace. During the week, students learn assistive technologies, office applications, and basic Internet skills. Field trips and guest speakers expose students to many career opportunities and role models.

To learn more about these camp programs, please contact: Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind
1120 20th Street, NW, Suite 750 South
Washington, DC 20036
Antoine Johnson @ 240-737-5169 or
Andrea Noel @ 202-454-6409
<http://www.clb.org/children/summercamp.htm>

Courage Camps - Augmentative Alternative Communication Camp

Camp Courage hosts camping sessions for youth with physical disabilities. Four sessions are currently offered, for campers from 7-17, with a wide range of program activities. Sessions vary in content in response to campers' ages and camp experience. The opportunity to grow in responsibility through special projects or volunteering is woven into the program. The camp facilities and grounds give campers a chance to try a wide range of activities - from horseback riding and swimming in the indoor heated pool to enjoying the camp library, museum, tennis courts or gymnasium and taking part in more traditional activities such as nature studies, bird watching, crafts, and fishing.



Courage Camps also hosts a session specifically focused on teens who use AAC devices. This session is for teens, ages 12-19, who use synthesized speech devices. This session is designed for those users who need to learn more about the capabilities of their device and the importance of communication. Campers participate in all the fun camp activities, such as horseback riding and tubing behind a boat. Device use is encouraged before, during, and after each activity, (except in the water!) Special night programs are designed to further encourage device use. During intake, camp pages and vocabulary as well as camp songs are loaded into each camper's device. Campers are able to meet other teens who use AAC devices as well as interact with a proficient AAC mentor. The session culminates in the production of an AAC play for family and friends. This year's play will be "The Little Mermaid: The Mermaid Who Wanted to Talk " The goal is to have campers learn the "power of communication" while having fun.

For more information on Courage Camps, please visit: <http://www.couragecamps.org/summer.html>

Lions Camp Tatiyee

Lions Camp Tatiyee was established in 1958 with the sole purpose of serving special needs individuals in the state of Arizona. The camp currently has four dormitories that can serve over 600 campers each season. The mission of Lions Camp Tatiyee is to provide a camping experience for challenged individuals, among their peers, that encourages independence and self-confidence.



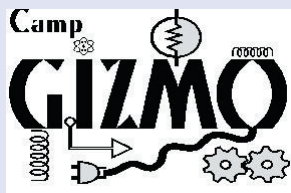
Camping sessions are divided by age and disability, with special sessions for the physically challenged, mentally challenged, multi-challenged and deaf campers. There is no fee to attend Lions Camp Tatiyee. The camp operates solely on donations from Lions, individuals, businesses, corporations and grant money.

Typically, over the course of the summer, Camp Tatiyee offers day programs including aquatics, fishing, arts and crafts, recreation, field sports, indoor sports, sign language, science, nature, drama, storytelling, music, dance, cooking camp-outs, water sports, team-building, etc. Some programs brought in for the enjoyment of campers may also include rock-climbing, karaoke, wilderness programs and more. Every Friday morning campers work together to solve puzzles, or 'save' camp. The evening programs consist of a camp party with each night having a different theme. Specialty counselors are hired to run daily programs.

For more information on Camp Tatiyee, please contact:
Lions Camp Tatiyee
PO Box 6910
Mesa, AZ 85216
Phone: 480-380-4254
arizonalionscamp@cox.net
<http://www.arizonalionscamp.com/default.asp>

Camp GIZMO

Camp Gizmo is a five-day hands-on camp where parents, professionals, and students learn how assistive technology can help young children (birth - 8 years) with significant and multiple developmental needs. A limited number of "focus" children will be accepted and assigned a team of professionals who help families identify and apply new strategies for solving their multiple assistive technology needs. Professionals and other caregivers involved with the children are encouraged to attend the camp also. Daily labs and workshops are available to camp participants. Parents attend workshops on subjects that help them better meet the needs of their child. Professionals and students attend workshops of interest that meet professional/ educational needs or assist the "focus" family. Teams meet daily to observe, discuss and implement strategies for the "focus" child. Camp Gizmo is held in conjunction with Kids Camp, a safe, fun camp experience for children with or without disabilities.



To learn more about Camp Gizmo, please contact:
Kathy Knighton/Ginger Huffman
WV Dept of Ed, 1-800-642-8541

or Pam Roush
WV Birth to Three, 1-800-642-9704
or Alyson Edwards, WVECTCR, 1-888-983-2827 or
aedwards@rvcds.org
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/campgizmo.htm>

CompuWrite 2007

CompuWrite is a computer writing camp for students with learning disabilities in grades 4 through 8. The primary focus of the camp is to work with students who are having difficulty with the writing process. The teacher/student ratio is typically 1:2. Students work on the five stages of writing by combining writing strategies with technology tools.



Teachers of CompuWrite "make writing fun" by enhancing the writing process using technology. They take information from parents and schools prior to camp and make decisions with parents about their child's individual focus areas. Then the principles of writing are applied, using available technology to facilitate the writing process. Over 40 assistive technology devices and 100 software titles are available for use in the CompuWrite lab. Students have the opportunity to use scanners, quick cams, digital cameras, video cameras, smart board, LCD projectors and the Internet in their learning activities. Both Macintosh and Windows platforms are used in the camps.

For more information or to request a registration packet, please contact:
Helen A. Kellar Institute for Human disabilities
George Mason University
703-993-3680
E-mail: compcamp@gmu.edu
<http://kihd.gmu.edu/camps>

Camp Jabber Jaw

Camp Jabber Jaw was established in 1997 to provide a fun way for individuals to develop improved interactive communication skills. The campers are both individuals who utilize augmentative and alternative communication devices (ACC) and those who do not, but are of similar ages. Parents attend the camp with their child and have the opportunity to interact with other parents, giving each an opportunity to share triumphs as well as challenges. The camp has provided a forum for the development of friendships, facilitation of interactive communication, and fun.



The five-day residential camp, held each June, is located at the T. K. Martin Center for Technology and Disability on the Mississippi State Campus.

Campers range in age from 5 to 16 years. Campers are required to attend with a caregiver. Campers are selected on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to returning campers. Dormitory housing is provided on campus. Activities include horseback riding, arts and crafts, swimming, dancing, and language activities.

For more information, please contact:

T.K. Martin Center for Technology & Disability

Laurie Craig - lmartin@tkmartin.msstate.edu

<http://www.tkmartin.msstate.edu/projects/jabberjaw.php>

Camp Chatterbox

Camp Chatterbox is a therapy camp for children, ages 5 – 16, who use augmentative and



alternative communication (AAC) devices and a training program for their parents. It is sponsored by the Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, NJ, and gives children an opportunity to interact with other children using AAC systems while learning to use their devices in functional activities. A parent is required to attend camp with their child and has the opportunity to participate in a wide range of parent training activities. A limited number of families are accepted into the program. Siblings must be at least 7 years of age. Camp Chatterbox uses the facilities of Camp Warren which is located just outside of Columbia, NJ. This wheelchair-accessible facility includes eight cabins with bathroom and shower facilities, a dining hall, recreation hall and a lake for fishing. It has an outdoor pool and facilities for a variety of outdoor sports.

This year's camp theme is "Extreme Makeover- Chatterbox Edition". It will take place August 13 - 19, 2007.

If you would like more information and/or an application please visit their website at www.campchatterbox.org or contact Joan Bruno, Ph.D., at 908-301-5451.



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