

The **CAMP OAKHURST** **CHALLENGE**

www.NYSH.org



Fall / Winter 2016-17

Camp Oakhurst Makes a Difference in People's Lives!

Emergency Respite

Since its inception in 2012, emergency respite at Camp Oakhurst has provided individuals with special needs, including autism and physical and intellectual disabilities, with a much-needed safe haven. This service has made a lasting difference in the lives of not only the individuals we serve, but also their caregivers.

Recently camp received a phone call from a Medicaid service coordinator at another agency to inquire about emergency respite for Grace, a 33 year old woman with cerebral palsy and profound intellectual disability, whose mother had just been admitted for observation at a hospital for showing signs of suicidal behavior. Grace's mother is her sole caregiver, and with no one to leave her with, she was brought to the hospital as well. Camp Oakhurst responded by immediately sending its staff and a van to pick her up, and she was settled in at the camp comfortably later that day.

Grace is non-verbal, and communicates through facial responses and simple gestures, uses a wheelchair and is completely dependent in all care needs. When she arrived at camp she came without personal belongings, including clothes and adult diapers. Oakhurst staff purchased all of this for her with a recent donation of a gift card from Target of Ocean Township.

During the weeks Grace remained at camp, she became acclimated to the daily routines and smiled frequently. She participated in all respite activities and appeared happy to participate.

Her mother was released from the hospital and on Halloween Grace was reunited with her and safely back at their apartment in NYC.

Adult Respite

Adult respite has been offered at camp for 32 years, providing a much-needed service to adult clients who

have aged out of the children's sessions.

The impact year-round respite has on the lives of participating clients was articulated in a letter Camp Oakhurst staff recently received from a 22 year old young man with mild intellectual disability who has been attending sessions since spring 2016.

The young man, Jordan, who is independent in all care needs, resides with his mother and younger brother in their apartment in the Bronx. In addition to adult respite, he attended summer camp this year as well.



Clients Visiting Amish Country During a Respite Trip

Jordan has been described by the staff as a "big teddy bear", someone who is sensitive and caring, the type who wants to be a friend to everyone. During camp sessions he throws himself wholeheartedly into all activities, from media arts and nature to swimming and arts and crafts. He has a gentle engaging personality which is reflected in his relationship with staff and fellow clients.

Jordan was eagerly anticipating attending the October respite session, when he learned the night before his departure that his father had passed away. Although he was understandably distraught by the news, Jordan was adamant that he still wanted to go to Oakhurst. While there he wrote a letter explaining his reasons for attending respite during such a difficult time.

"I've told my mother I wanted to go to camp because it's a second family to me. I've been coming to camp about a year now the first time I've come I was comfortable and

felt safe in this environment. so I decided to call it my second home. It's my second home because I made a lot of friend and conceller form all around the world. The conselleor were all ways there for me when I felt down, everyone is very supported and caring. I wanted to say thank u Camp Oakhurst for helping me for the lost of my father. I will always love this camp for the rest of my life. P.S. to all campers and concellers you are like brother and sisters to me that I never had thank u so much."

Jordan and Grace are just two of the individuals who attend the year round programs at Oakhurst who have had positive lasting experiences.

Shore Friends of Camp Oakhurst

For more than twenty-five years, Shore Friends has been raising funds for Camp Oakhurst through its annual raffle, which is held in September of each year. This event is made possible through the tireless efforts of co-chairs Deborah Ansell, a Monmouth County resident, and Adelle Rathe, a Camp Oakhurst board member. This year they raised \$43,700 for the programs at Camp Oakhurst. We are very grateful for their dedication and support. Thank you!

Fall Theater Benefit 2016

This year's annual fall benefit was held on October 20th, and featured an evening of cocktails, a three course seated dinner and a Broadway show.

The evening began as guests arrived at historic Sardi's restaurant for a delightful meal and excellent service. Marilyn Friedman, board president, presented remarks which included excerpts from a letter we had recently received from a client in respite (*a feature on this individual is in the lead story on page 1.*)

After dinner, guests headed over to the Imperial Theatre for a performance of *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812*. The musical, which stars Josh Groban and Denee Benton, features an innovative use of space, sound and lighting, which integrates the theatergoers into the performance, while the action occurs around them.

It was a memorable evening and a successful event, which raised over \$145,000. (*Photographs of the event appear in the centerfold of this issue.*)

Monmouth University Volunteer Day

For the past 17 years, Monmouth University has held "The Big Event," a community service day that enlists approximately 400 volunteers from the university to take part in local community projects. This year they again chose Camp Oakhurst as one of their projects.



Monmouth University Volunteers Hard at Work

On Saturday, November 5th, 17 cheerful college students arrived at camp at 9:30 am to clean the camp's Gore building and day respite classroom. Volunteers wiped down walls and windows, swept and mopped, and thoroughly cleaned the rooms. Some of the students also worked in the sensory garden, cleaning it out for spring planting. We are pleased to once again thank Monmouth University for including Oakhurst in this annual event!

Summer Camp 2016



Summer 2016 was a special camp season! Attendance across our six sleep away camp sessions totaled 320 campers, with our day camp total attendance reaching 63 campers. Our sleep away camp continues to draw campers mostly from New York (61%) and New Jersey (36%), with a few (3%) coming to us from other states.

New this summer was a completely renovated Activity Building, (thanks to a major gift from the Jewish

Communal Fund, through UJA-Federation of New York), with a new and especially vibrant arts and crafts room, with air conditioning now in several of the activity rooms, and much-improved sound and lights in the Adelle and Robert Rathe Theater.

In addition, the Oaks Cabin has all new floors and a completely renovated barrier-free bathroom, and our pool's interior was completely repainted just prior to summer. Thanks to our friends at Twin Resources, our



great new sensory garden saw its first full season in action, with both the cooking program and our cook utilizing its plentiful bounty!

Theme Days

Each summer the three camp youth sessions are planned around particular themes which culminate in an end of session banquet night, in which campers dress-up for a much-anticipated evening. The dining hall is decorated according to the theme, and afterward there is music provided by a DJ, as well as dancing.

Themes for the summer of 2016 were created for each session by different staff. The first session's theme was planned by the activity specialists and utilized super heroes as their central theme. Campers performed skits as their chosen characters in the drama activity and designed their own comic books in arts and crafts. Themes not only provided entertainment, but incorporated an educational element as well.

In the second session, cabins were divided into the "kingdoms of camp," a concept that was introduced by our program coordinator. In keeping with this theme, each cabin became an imaginary kingdom which was decorated to represent the realm, with campers dressed in appropriate garb. A different sovereign was chosen daily, who presided over their "camper subjects."

The final session's theme was created by camp director Charles Sutherland. The focus was on the 50 states, in which each cabin chose a particular state to center their activities around. Each cabin had to learn both fun and educational facts about their particular state. On banquet night, staff dressed as famous presidents such as Abraham Lincoln, much

to everyone's delight.

For example, one theme focused on the state of Texas. Tables were set up to resemble horseshoes, and red checked tablecloths were laid out. In arts and crafts campers made place cards in the shape of cowboy hats. Of course, the food was all down home barbecue.

On the last day of the session, camp took on a carnival atmosphere with rides, games, dunking tanks, pie toss, and a petting zoo. In the evening, the banquet was held in the dining hall. The event was carefully planned by staff and campers who signed up to help. Together they planned meals, drew up menus, arranged table settings, and attended to every detail to make the event a wonderful experience.

For those involved in the planning it is an exciting part of their camp experience. Matthew, a camper who has been in attendance since he was 8 years old and is now 22, was intrinsically involved in the planning.

Matthew is a very social and energetic individual, who often acts as the liaison for new campers, making them feel welcome, as well as getting them involved in theme days. He helped plan it all: designing where things went on theme day, as well as drawing diagrams of where each activity should take place. He was instrumental in setting up the dinner and dancing, as well as making musical suggestions for the DJ.



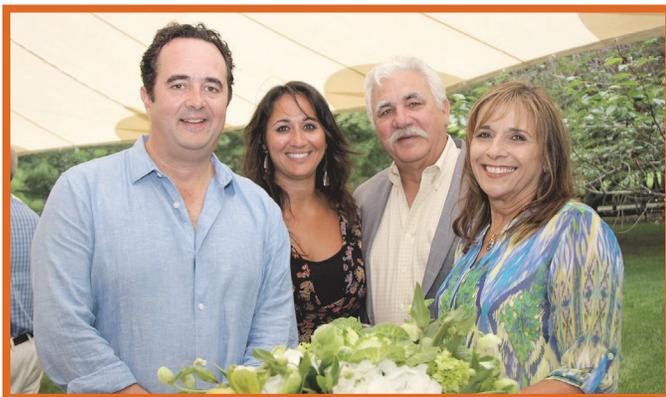
Matthew Enjoying a Tortoise at the Petting Zoo

Matthew was quick to point out that he has been doing this for some time, and has become quite adept at the planning. When asked what he liked the best, his answer, was an emphatic "everything!" A great team player, Matthew was a big part of the success of this summer's theme days and banquet nights.

Summer Party 2016

This summer's "Send A Kid To Camp" fundraiser was held on July 9th at the home of Krista and David Long in Rumson, New Jersey. It was a beautiful evening under the tent, where a dance floor, couches and tables were tastefully placed. Guests were treated to cocktails and hors d'oeuvres while dancing to live music.

Brief remarks were given by several people including Moody, the head Oakhurst lifeguard from Jordan, who has been working at camp the past 3 summers. Moody spoke emotionally on what Camp Oakhurst means to him and the staff that work there. The event was successful, with 130 guests attending and over \$70,000 raised for camp scholarships!



From the Desks of the President and Executive Director

2016 has been an exciting year at Camp Oakhurst. The year-round services provided to children and adults with special needs continue to be in high demand, with the growth of autism services leading the way, and our emergency respite and after school day programs making a real difference in people's lives.

In addition to the 2 clients described in this newsletter, this past year we are proud to have also helped:

- A young man with cerebral palsy in need of full

personal care for seven weeks after being left alone in a hospital where his father and only caretaker passed away.

- A child with autism with working parents with no appropriate afterschool care available, jeopardizing his well-being and his parents' ability to work.
- A teenager with developmental disabilities neglected by his caregiver with no permanent supportive housing available for many months.

We have much to do in 2017 to continue to positively impact the quality of life of the people we serve. How can you assist Camp Oakhurst to help more people in need of our services? Our needs in 2017 include:

- **Scholarship funding.** More than \$200,000 is needed to help provide income-scaled fees to client families in order for Camp Oakhurst's camp and respite services to be available to all regardless of their ability to pay. Nearly 90% of our clients receive an income scaled fee from Camp Oakhurst and/or reimbursement through family support services funding from the government.

- **New bus, sidewalks and a cabin renovation.** We need to replace our 10 year old wheelchair accessible 14 passenger bus (\$70,000), repave all our sidewalks (\$50,000) and renovate our Maples Cabin with a new bathroom and replace all the floor tiles (\$62,000.)

- **Therapeutic recreation.** Our therapeutic recreation activities (arts/crafts, media arts (iPad-based,) music, drama, cooking, nature studies, sports, swimming,) under the guidance of a therapeutic specialist, have annual costs (materials, equipment, training) of \$20,000.

- **Individual/group volunteers and in-kind donations.** Volunteers are an important resource for Camp Oakhurst and assist in daily recreational activities and help with painting and landscaping projects. In-kind donations of non-perishable food, toiletries, plantings, and cleaning supplies are also much-needed.

Any contribution you are able to make to help us meet these needs – financial, as a volunteer, by donating goods and services, would be most appreciated.

In short, Camp Oakhurst is a safe haven that nurtures growth, inspires confidence and celebrates joy. Fulfilling our mission is only possible because of your continued support and partnership.

We wish you a happy and healthy 2017.

Marilyn Friedman
President

Robert Pacenza
Executive Director

The Camp Oakhurst Challenge is a publication of New York Service for the Handicapped. For more information, please contact: Wendy Eager, Editor, Camp Oakhurst, 1140 Broadway, Suite 903, NY, NY 10001, email events@nysh.org or call 212-533-4020.