

The CAMP OAKHURST CHALLENGE

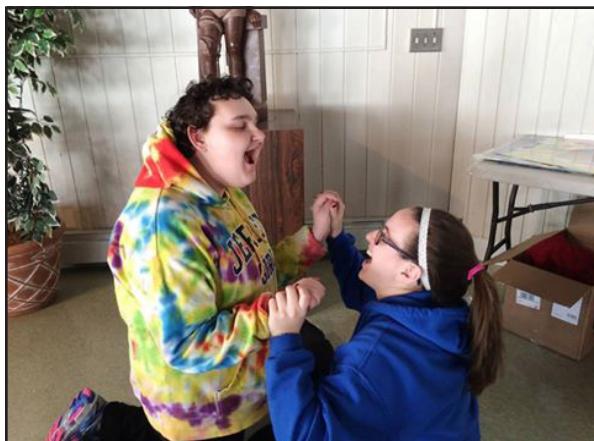
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Spring 2015

Day Respite Care Program Is In Full Swing

On February 9th we launched our new Day Respite Care program, which has been established to provide school-age children with special needs who reside in Monmouth County with care after school and on school closure days while their parents are still at work.



For Paulie, a ten year old boy with autism who resides in Marlboro, NJ, the Day Respite Care program has been the perfect solution. His mother had a difficult time finding after-school care for him. Prior to his enrollment, she had resorted to hiring someone to meet Paulie at his bus stop, escort him home and stay with him until a family member could take charge, the cost of which was a financial burden for them. For Paulie and his family the opening

of the Day Respite Care program came at the right time.

Paulie quickly settled into a daily routine after school, and became very excited upon arrival, fully engaging in all of the activities. His mother couldn't have been happier. In fact, she has become an advocate for the program, promoting it to other local families with similar challenges.

Another attendee, Briana is an eleven year old girl from Tinton Falls with Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome, a condition that affects many parts of the body, and includes delayed growth and development as well as intellectual disabilities. Briana was already familiar with the camp and staff from attending summer and respite sessions since 2011 and is very happy to be in the program.

Briana's enrollment enables her mother to retain her employment, and allows her older sister to engage in her own after-school activities. Most important, Briana has the opportunity to take part in activities that are fully adapted to her needs, as well as work with a caring staff who know her. She arrives bursting with energy and is constantly looking to become involved in the activity of the moment.

The program, which offers children assistance with homework, as well as adapted and therapeutic recreational activities, is housed in a newly created 1,000 square foot classroom in our Main House. Currently, eight individuals, ranging from ages 8 to 16, are enrolled.

Each individual's activities are recorded in a daily journal which is then shared with parents and teachers. It includes information on activities, homework assignments, and progress reports. Parents are very pleased with this form of communication and have given frequent positive feedback to the staff.



Although the program has started off with a small group of children, due to having been launched in the middle of the school year, many parents who have visited have expressed interest in enrolling their children this fall. Families who are already enrolled plan to stay on board once the new school year begins, which is right after summer camp.

What's New for Summer Camp 2015

Charles Sutherland, director of services and operations, attended summer camp fairs in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Amman, Jordan in January to recruit staff for this summer. In addition to our returning staff, there will be a number of new highly qualified, enthusiastic individuals greeting our campers on opening day.

But that is not all that is new... this summer, campers will be pleasantly surprised when they sit down for meals in the dining hall. Shannon Murray, the new camp chef, joined us this winter. With her solid background in the

culinary arts, campers can expect well-planned nutritious and tasty meals.

The agency has also hired Michelle Spears, a therapeutic recreational specialist, who will be reviewing each individual's history and needs, before meeting them to devise a personalized therapeutic recreational program, which will concentrate on motor skills, cognition and peer interaction through recreational activities.

To enhance the therapeutic experience, Michelle has been working closely with our clients and direct care team, led by Charles Sutherland, to upgrade and improve our recreational materials and equipment, as well as the activities themselves, through new staff trainings and personalized client goals/outcome reporting.

For example, the program will utilize therapeutic items like a sensory ball which incorporates the tactile senses by shaking, touching and feeling the shape of the item. This typically works well with individuals with autism. It is also well suited for clients with physical disabilities with limited mobility, many of whom use wheelchairs. They are able to maximize stretching and use their muscles by playing and handling the ball. When the pool opens in May, Michelle also plans to incorporate an aquatics component to the program.



New trainings have been implemented in-house and we have partnered with Ramapo for Children to train our staff on different topics, including inclusion models and behavioral management.

With all of the activities and planning for the summer, the staff is also equally busy with registration for the summer sessions which are filling up rapidly. There are still some spaces available. We urge families who are interested in enrollment to contact the camp directly at 732-531-0215, email us at info@nysh.org or visit the website at nysh.org and go to the services page for information and an application.

An Emergency Respite Story

Emergency respite continues to be a much-needed resource to provide a temporary safe haven for adults and children with special needs.

Michelle, a 43 year old woman from Chester, NJ, with autism, speech impairment and intellectual disability, was placed in emergency respite on January 9th by New Jersey's Adult Protective Services (APS). Michelle came to us with a history of abuse at home. She arrived as a nervous, frightened woman, who was not toilet trained, and could barely communicate, refusing to leave her bed or change her clothing. At one point in her life, her case study showed her as weighing 200 pounds, but when Michelle arrived at Oakhurst she weighed barely 90 pounds.

In the four months since Michelle arrived, she has surpassed staff expectations – she has gained weight, no longer uses a diaper for toileting and clearly expresses her needs through sign language and some limited verbal communication.

Michelle's family and the APS worker had reported that while she was at home she would continually scream and destroy objects in her

vicinity. However, she has not exhibited any of those behaviors with us.

When she first arrived she shied away from any physical contact, but has since transformed into a warm, friendly individual who loves to hug our staff. She now leaves the cabin for activities and enjoys being in the dining area where she happily assists with setting the table, taking the trays to the dishwasher and other tasks. Michelle loves to be helpful and this is one way she expresses it.

During her short stay at camp, Michelle has come a long way from the woman who arrived in January.



Since the emergency respite program's inception in October 2012 we have provided many individuals like Michelle with such services. In 2014 alone, the camp was able to provide emergency care for 21 individuals, many for long periods of time while they waited for a more permanent placement. All of these individuals have equally important stories to be told.

Open House May 19th - Come Visit!

On Tuesday, May 19th, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., Camp Oakhurst staff and clients will welcome members of the Oakhurst, Ocean Township and greater Monmouth County communities to introduce Camp Oakhurst, our services, both day and overnight, to new clients, families, caregivers and service professionals.

We are proud and excited to share with members of the community our beautiful campus, and the buildings, grounds, staff, clients and activities that inhabit our 15 acre campus, a mile from the Atlantic Ocean.

We will be promoting the open house with large outdoor banners, and doing outreach through social media, our website, email and mail. We hope to have many new faces in attendance. Please email openhouse@nysh.org or call 732-531-0215 for more information.

Rice University Students Substitute Service for Spring Break

Each spring, Rice University offers its students an alternative to spring break, utilizing the concept of giving back through community service. This year, 15 diverse young men and women, whose commonality was a shared interest in individuals with disabilities, flew from Texas to the Jersey Shore, to volunteer their spring break time to assist at Camp Oakhurst.

From February 28 to March 7, the volunteers could be seen helping staff with clients during activities, cleaning up winter debris, and giving assistance wherever it was needed.

Camp Oakhurst would like to extend its thanks to Rice University and its students for giving their time, diligent hard work and enthusiasm to work with our clients and spruce up our facility for the summer sessions.

From the Desks of the President and the Executive Director

In addition to making improvements to the accessibility and quality of our therapeutic activities for our clients, we have made important capital improvements to our buildings and grounds over the past year and now have a multi-year comprehensive plan to fully renovate, repair and upgrade all of our facilities and grounds.

Since last year, we completed full renovations to our health center and laundry facilities, and expanded and repaved our parking lot. Since January, we have begun to complete and schedule important repairs and improvements. Among these, in January we finished building a 1,000 square foot day respite classroom on the first floor of our Main House and also installed all new floor tiles, molding and new baseboard covers throughout the 8,000 square feet of the first floor of the building. In addition, we built-out a new office for four staff, fully renovated the Main House dining room bathrooms, and remodeled the main entrance hallway.

In May, we are installing a new perimeter fence and gate replacing an old chain link fence that is along our visible perimeter on Monmouth and S. Lincoln Roads. The new fence and main gate will be durable and attractive and made of black cast iron-style ornamental aluminum. This project is one of the first of several major pieces we have identified as critical to undertake, to begin to help Camp Oakhurst be a more attractive presence and have higher visibility in our community. We will also be installing a two-sided visible colorful sign at the corner of S. Lincoln and Monmouth roads this year.

All of these capital improvements are made possible through the generosity of our donors, for which we and the families we serve are most grateful. Similarly, with support from individuals, government, and foundations, most notably The Taft Foundation and the Kessler Foundation, we are able to offer enriched programs and scholarships to the overwhelming majority of our families who would otherwise be unable to experience the joy that is Camp Oakhurst. Thank you all.

Marilyn Friedman Robert Pacenza
President Executive Director

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