



Camp News



Volume 1, Issue 1

September 2010

Notes

About Our Campers

I'm a volunteer "Big Brother" to an eleven year old hearing impaired youth who attended Bear Lake Camp this past summer. Today was my first day to spend some time with him since he was at camp (we're in the school based mentoring program), and let me tell you, he had a great time and came back with many stories and experiences that will last him a lifetime. Thank you Lions and supporters who made this possible. You've truly made a difference in a young boy's life.

Jim Brian
Director of Communications
United Way of Jackson
County

What I value about camp is she can meet and spend time with kids that are having the same problems as she is and knows what it's like to be different.

Parent of visually impaired camper

Campers Say So Long to Nurse Pat

Lion Pat Carlson, MSN, RN began as the camp nurse the first summer that Bear Lake Camp (BLC) opened it's doors in 2000. Pat is a member of the Lathrup Village Lions Club and has contributed her memories for this column.

Each summer brought anticipations of seeing the physical growth, but the increase in maturity, self esteem, and independence of the campers was also clearly noted. To think, once they might have been homesick or loveable rebellious teenagers or shy and frightened kids by all the sounds, smells, and activities of the camp. Now they are in college, working, married and/or living with better self esteem and independence. There are so many stories to recall; the boy who was convinced he could fly from the top of one bunk to the other – he couldn't, but he did get a sprained ankle. Also the young camper that wouldn't take her medications until I crushed it up and put it in the middle of an Oreo cookie (after that I always brought Oreo cookies to camp). Kids like these do grow up and often become future camp staff and members of our community.

The new campers and their parents were also fun to meet. As I sat and talked to them during registration it was often apparent that they were more insecure than their child. They were often over protective, did everything for their child, and now turned them over to us. Questions were asked: Will they get their medicine on time? Do you know how to put these

braces on? Can you run this C-pac machine? Or can I call them at camp? Yes, Yes, Yes, and No. I remember one low vision child with diabetes receiving a large box during mail time. His glucose levels went from normal to 600+ to 35. Out of control! That called for a cabin search. Found...the box filled with candy and a note from Mom "share with your cabin mates." As you can anticipate a new rule was made, counselors are to be with their campers when boxes are opened.

Yes, I have helped kids by giving them ordered and over the counter medications. More important was the act of letting them become more independent and accountable in taking care of themselves. Such as teaching them to give their own eye drops, count the number of pills to be taken, encouraging and instructing them to give their own injections and the importance of hygiene. Teaching counselors how to wash their hands so they could teach the kids.

Some memories are sad. One child's mother died during child birth, the father became abusive, the child was removed to the custody of foster parents and experienced a series of abuses. Then an angel came and gave him to a wonderful loving set of foster parents. They sent him to us. One day we were talking about our first teddy bear. He said "I never had one." Thanks to the generosity of a Lion and his wife I was able to give this 14 year



Lion Pat Carlson, MSN, RN
Camp Nurse for 11 summers.

old boy a fuzzy, soft bear. His smile said it all! Tears came to my eyes.

I was here when there was no grass, but lots of mud. The kids would be here in four hours and we did not have final word on our ability to open camp. The health center could not be used because it had only one door. Then again how could we have used it when the earth gave way and there was no safe path to the entrance.

This summer, I will always remember children at the archery field, in the art center with its new linoleum floor, the brand new play area that is well used, in the nature center, the activity center, on the trails and at the lake. I have many times sat on my health center deck watching the kids play. Isn't it heart warming that we as Lions have been able to build this camp. We are blessed to have the village Al Kassin envisioned.

The campers and staff wish Pat the best in retirement, she will be missed.



EMU students look on as hearing impaired campers perform for their parents their last day of camp.

“At first it was a challenge to communicate with the campers, but I quickly learned how to do it.”

EMU Comes to Lions Bear Lake Camp

Eastern Michigan University has had a relationship with Lions Bear Lake Camp since the inception of the hearing impaired session. Students studying to be teachers of the deaf and hard-of-hearing have been completing their introductory practicum here since 2007.

To date 24 EMU students have facilitated camper groups in “Fun and Games,” have led evening activities, have eaten meals with cabin groups, and have participated with campers in free time activities. The camp offers pre-service teachers opportunities to learn to communicate with children and young adults who have a variety

of hearing loss, who wear hearing aids or have cochlear implants, and who have various spoken language abilities.

Students plan lessons that foster participation and write reflective papers about their work at this week-long camp. For most of these students this is their first experience with children and young adults who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and reflections have included comments such as: “I learned that I have more patience than I ever thought I had.” “I learned that teaching is a tough profession, but I know it’s for me!” “At first it was a challenge to communicate with

the campers, but I quickly learned how to do it.” “I love this camp!”

The Department of Special Education at Eastern Michigan University is indebted to Lions Bear Lake Camp for their continued support of the students in the Hearing Impaired Program Area and is grateful for the opportunities that abound at this camp. The program is enriched by this learning ground and students are able to begin their advanced coursework and internships better prepared because of this experience.

Contributed by Professor Linda Polter of EMU

Founders Award Presented at Hearing Impaired Session

At the conclusion of each hearing impaired session, campers provide a theme presentation for their parents. This summer was special with a 10-year anniversary presentation added to the schedule. At the conclusion of the campers presentations, Lion Dave Dykstra, President of the Board of Directors presented the Founders Award to Judy Horvath and Julie Steele. Judy and Julie are teachers of the deaf and hard-of-hearing children. They ap-

proached Lions Bear Lake Camp 10 years ago with the idea of starting a camp for hearing impaired children who use spoken language and listening skills. They felt there wasn’t a camp program that focused singly on their needs. They volunteered their services to recruit campers, develop the program, train staff and run the session at camp. They put in countless hours year after year and have crafted a popular quality program.



Dennis Tomkins, Camp Director, Judy Horvath, Julie Steele, Dave Dykstra Board President

District Governors Visit Camp

Each year the District Governors (DG’s) are invited to visit Bear Lake Camp during the Visually Impaired camp session. Some come to camp for the first time and are amazed. This year when asked before they arrived at camp what they expected to see, they mentioned all the things they have read about: cabins, a lake, a dining hall, etc. When they arrived at camp the first thing those same DG’s said when they stepped from the van was, “Oh my! never expected this, it’s so

nice!” and they hadn’t even toured camp.

Upon arrival they were greeted by the Camp Director, Dennis Tomkins and given a brief tour of camp. Back at the dining hall, Dennis introduced them to the Visually Impaired Camp Coordinator, Stephanie Steffer, a teacher for the visually impaired. Stephanie gave the DG’s a hands on demonstration about the campers visual impairments. She used special glasses that they wore while

trying to complete simple tasks like writing their name, stringing beads and coloring in the lines. They were amazed at what they discovered. Dennis talked about camp and how far they have come in the last ten years. Soon it was time for dinner with the campers, an ice cream social by the Sterling Heights Lions and game night for the campers with the DG’s running the games. When it came to smiles it was a tie as to who had more fun the DG’s or the kids!



District Governor Barb Treichel helping a camper play Go Fish.

10th Anniversary—A Celebration for All

On July 17, 2010 Lions and guests celebrated ten years of success and growth of the Lions Bear Lake Camp in Lapeer County. Those attending enjoyed tours, cake and a cool drink. Some even walked the trail around the lake.

Thanks to Lions like you, the camp has come a long way in ten years. In 2000, ten cabins, the Health Center, Nature Center, Art Center and Activity Center were completed so the camp could open for the first time. Fifty three visually impaired youth attended a two week camp for the first time at

Lions Bear Lake Camp. In 2001 we added the hearing impaired youth session and welcomed 56 campers.

Since those first couple of years the camp has seen much growth with the addition of Camp Dakota, a camp for youth with juvenile arthritis; a weekend family camp for families with autistic children;



Braille Beats Music and Fine Arts camp, are just some of the camps. This year we welcome the Michigan Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's "Camp Chris" to our family of summer programs for youth.

The camp has also been able to add over the years the dining hall, a nature trail, a pavilion for the archery area, a bath house on the camping hill, an athletic field, the play ground and much more.

We invite you and your Lions Club to call and arrange a visit to YOUR CAMP.



New Lions Mike and Sara Borowicz revisit camp during the 10th Anniversary celebration.

Dave Dykstra President Board of Directors (at left) welcomes the visitors to camp.

New Generators Up and Running

It started with a near crisis at camp during a power outage. We began to express our needs for a back up source of power in order to operate the camp successfully. District 11-C2 under the leadership of then DG Kevin Storberg jumped right in with an initial \$5,000 challenge donation and more fundraisers that followed. Districts 11-D2 and A2 followed with more donations that allowed for the installation of two of the three planned

generators that would make camp self sufficient. Lions from Lake Orion and Fraser Clubs jumped in to offer the labor to install the generators helping keep our costs down. We are now hoping to install the third and largest generator before next summer's program. According to Jim Lykins, (unofficial project coordinator) we need another \$7,000 to complete the project. We appreciate the enthusiasm and support of Lions for this project.



Jim Lykins (above) & Jim Pettinato (left) of Lake Orion Lions Club.



Matt (front) & Mark (back) Hemelberg of the Fraser Lions Club.

Director's Corner

It takes much planning and coordinating to operate the summer camping programs. We always have many people to thank for our continued success. But sometimes, it is those clubs and individuals that show up year after year like clockwork that we forget to thank, acknowledge and show our appreciation. Since we opened our gates at Bear Lake Camp, and before, there are a few clubs that have been here every year. I would like to take

this space in the newsletter to thank them for their long term participation in our summer program: The Rochester Hills and Shelby Township Lions Clubs provide a supper meal for our campers; the Armada Lions Club provides a lunch cookout; and the Sterling Heights Lions Club provide an ice cream social that is loved by all!

From the Bear Lake staff and campers we are very thankful.

Director Dennis Tomkins



Armada Lions Club serve lunch to the visually impaired campers.

LIONS
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*"I like that he
matures some at
camp each year.
Learns to advo-
cate for himself.
He is happier..."*

Parent of visually impaired
camper



A Great Place to Grow

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January 2010 to present

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Lathrup Village Lions

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Lions Bear Lake Camp

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