

Summer Camps for Children with Special Health Care Needs

By: Thuy Nguyen



Summer is here! For many parents, it's a time to map out activities to keep their children engaged when they are out of school. Parents have many options; family trips, day-care, and something I will be writing about, **SUMMER CAMPS**. In

particular, this article is about camps for children w/ special health care needs.

As a parent of a young adult with Spina Bifida, summer planning is something I have gone through. When my son was younger, the thought of sending him to summer camp for the first time was terrifying and difficult. The things that I often asked myself were: Will the camp have staff to meet my son's personal as well as medical needs? Is the camp location fully accessible? Will he be comfortable with the environment? Will he socialize and make new friends? Will he be included in all activities?

Truth be told, once I got past those barriers, sending him to both residential camp and specialty day camps was the best decision for me and my child. It not only allowed me some free time, but also provided me more time to spend with my other child, even if it was for a few hours. Summer camp gave my child with special

- Continued on next page



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needs the opportunity to be away from family, instilling independence and developing social skills. After camp concluded, he would arrive home and mention how much fun he had and all the new friends and staff he met.

The benefits of camps are the same for all children, especially for children w/special health care needs.

- Gives parents a chance for a much-needed break
- May help increase your child's self-confidence, independence, self-esteem as well as self-awareness
- Provides the opportunities to network with other kids, develop friendships as well as build relationships.
- Provides activity and exercise
- Staff can provide positive role models

To get the Recreation Resource Guide for the Gulf South Region, click onto: http://www.chnola.org/Images/Interior/pdfs/resourceguide_0613.pdf

Below are some summer camp resource articles that can help parents decide:

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

<http://www.nchpad.org/discover/index.html>

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

<http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org/act/family-life/summer-camps-for-children-with-special-needs/>



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