

AMPUTEES COMING TOGETHER 2nd ANNUAL SUMMER CAMP: A SUCCESS!!

For the second year in a row, Amputees Coming Together of Knoxville, TN sponsored a summer camp for children and volunteers. Nineteen participants met on Saturday morning and headed out for North Carolina, destination the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC). The ride to North Carolina is remarkable by its beauty, and by its roads. We survived 318 unbelievable curves in 11 miles uphill. We arrived at NOC, and had a fantastic trip down the Nantahala River. A few participants decided to test the water in a big way and quickly found their way back into the boat. The eight mile river stretch was fun, cold and exciting. We made it back to NOC just in time for dinner and the evening activity of mountain music and storytelling around a campfire.

The next morning, we had an early start after a wonderful meal prepared by our Chief-chef and assistant-chef (Charlie and Walter). After we did some team-building activities on a giant teeter-totter we spent the day on the ropes course. If you have never done one, it is a must. Missing a limb(s) was no hindrance to our campers and volunteers. Everyone who wanted to, climbed and was rewarded at the end of the course by a magnificent 1 1/2 second free-fall from a forty foot platform. Of course we were harnessed and tethered the entire time and very safe. The challenge was to push yourself as far as you dared and many of us did just that. The evening activity of movies was followed by a great night of sleep as we were all getting pretty tired from the constant fun.

Monday morning we received our ACT Summer Camp '96 shirts and had our group photo taken. We were off to Cherokee, NC to the Oconaluftee Indian reservation to learn about the life of the Cherokee Indians. The facility is wonderful, accessible and very interesting. The highlight of the trip turned out to be our next activity which was tubing on Deep Creek. We were very fortunate to be able to get access to the road that paralleled the creek and even more fortunate to have a means of uphill transportation, courtesy of Walt's electric golf cart. We made lots of trips up and down the creek, got dumped in the water numerous times and had a blast. Once again the hours of the day went by too quickly and we made it back to NOC just in time for dinner. We celebrated the birthdays of Missy and Beau and then spend the evening designing the logo for next year's T-shirt and packing up.

It was hard to believe that it was all ready Tuesday and we were heading home. But we had things to do before we hit Knoxville. Namely, we had to hike into the Joyce Kilmer Forest which has some virgin timber that is tremendous (I mean TREE-MENDOUS!!). Many of the campers and volunteers walked over 1 mile to see the trees. Delicia commented that the trees were beautiful, "like a real forest." We got back into our cars and headed for UT campus to meet the Schuler brothers and shoot some hoops. Unfortunately, traffic did not cooperate and we were late getting to UT so we received signed photographs of the Schulers and pizza courtesy of Mike. We were toured around UT and got to set foot on the turf of the huge UT football stadium and shoot some baskets in the arena where the National Champions Lady Vols play.

Our time was running out so we had to head back to UT to greet parents and say good-bye to new friends. We had a great time and are already planning for next year!