

10th Annual ACT Camp Sunshine and Smiles

It is hard to believe that 10 years have gone by since ACT started this camp for children with amputations. We have grown from a weekend camp with 11 campers to a four day camp with over 40 participants. Thanks go to lots of people who have continued to make this camp a success: ACT of Knoxville, Marianne Rankin, Phyllis and Ron Frohlich, Alan Hammer, Annette Dusenbury, Julie Suttles, Paul Newman, Peyton Manning, and all our new and repeat sponsors and volunteers. Check the back of this year's T-shirt to see the people who have supported camp by contributing \$250 or more. We are thankful to all those faithful people who have donated any amount. Every contribution brings a child to camp.

This year we were a little anxious about what the weather would hold and were pleasantly surprised when the 2 weeks of rain stopped on Thursday when we arrived! Each day was more magnificent than the previous, weather wise and smiles wise. We were on two rivers this year – the warm and lazy Tennessee and the great and wild Nantahala. The Tennessee was for older, experienced campers who got to try navigating a “ducky” (inflatable kayak) alone or with the assistance of a volunteer. This new experience was challenging and fun for all. The feedback was so positive that we will try it with more campers next year. Our smallest campers were also on the Tennessee in a raft and spent a lot of time swimming and having water fights! Everyone else was on the cold and fast Nantahala River in rafts. Water fights and rapids kept everyone's attention. Later that evening, we heard stories (some scary, some silly) around a fire and made gooey, delicious S'Mores.

Friday we woke to sunshine and a delicious breakfast by Charlie. We needed to be well fortified for the ropes course. This all day activity challenged everyone to beat some fears and overcome some beliefs about what is “impossible.” The staff at the Nantahala Outdoor Center was absolutely top flight (and included the best of the best in North Carolina and nationwide, for climbing and adaptive equipment, brought in specifically to work with our campers). With their ingenuity and tools of the climbing trade, they made it possible for each camper to climb as high as he/she chose to go. Some campers went up 40 feet to the top ropes challenge, some went up 20 feet, and others went up the “rat trap” to swing from the 40 foot tower. The Alpine Tower was a very busy place this year as many campers tried their skill at reaching different levels. A few even made it to the top to write an inspiring message in the book up there. It was a great day –

old campers achieved new things and new campers replaced "Can't do" with "Can do." The busy day ended with a movie for the younger group and bowling for the older group.

Saturday, more sunshine, and we are off to Lake Fontana to meet with the folks from Eskimo Escapes, and the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center for a day of waterskiing! This is the fourth year that we have had the fortune to have these good people donate their time, equipment and talent to getting our campers in the water, out of the water, and under the water! Everyone achieved something new, brave and wonderful (from floating in water for the first time, to paddling a kayak, to riding in a boat, to riding on a Jet Ski, to knee boarding, to tubing, to sit skiing, to slalom skiing). It was a great day to see campers and volunteers smile and applaud the successes of others. We were out on the lake ALL day and reluctantly headed back. A delicious dinner, sponsored by Eskimo Escapes, awaited us but finally we had to say farewell, and head back to camp.

Our last morning at camp found us eating, packing, picture taking and heading off with Stephan for a nature hike. This was a new event this year. We learned about birch beer plants, plants to use for poison ivy, plants that sparkle underwater and plants that you can eat and use for tea. It was a lovely morning for a walk and to get ready to say good-bye. The final activity was the recognition of great accomplishments by all the campers and volunteers. We had our first annual achievement awards ceremony. From the funny to the serious, everyone was acknowledged for something that he/she did or tried to do at camp. It was a great way to say good-bye and to dream about the things to try next year.

We had a wonderful time. Thanks for coming and we'll see you again next July.

P.S. We have:

- a. One pair of navy blue shorts with a light blue and white strip on the side, size medium.
- b. One pair of army green shorts with army insignias on the side, size 8. A name is marked on the tag but is unreadable.
- c. 3 single ply stump socks, about 24 inches.

Please let me know if these belong to you. (540-545-7238)