

Campfire News

Rotary's Camp Florida ~ July 2013

LIZZIE'S WALKWAY

Meet 18-year old Lizzie Caballero, who has enjoyed going to camp for 10 years. Like many other visitors to Rotary's Camp Florida, Lizzie has some favorite activities as well as many fond memories of the friends she's met through the years. Some of her favorite camp memories are arts and crafts projects, the carnival, the dance at the end of the week, and fishing on the dock from her wheelchair.

In recent years it has been difficult to push Lizzie, who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy, through the soft sand down to the docks...so members of the Rotary Club of Tampa (home club of Lizzie's grandfather Leo Diaz) built a walkway from the courtyard down to the dock. Recently a plaque naming the walkway was installed, and this summer many wheelchair-bound campers will be able to get to the lake via Lizzie's Walkway!



Lizzie and her dad



Kayaking on the lake!

ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

On Sunday, April 28 Florida Rotarians joined together for the Annual Meeting of Rotary's Camp Florida. The meeting began with a warm welcome from RCF Board President Cliff Snedeker, Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice-President Ed Johns, invocation by Russ Miller, and reading of minutes from the April 2012 meeting.

One of the main agenda items was the election of six new board members. The following people have been elected for two-year terms:

Robert W. (Bob) Arnold - Winter Haven Rotary
Leo Diaz - Rotary Club of Tampa
Alan Feldman- Rotary Club of Brandon
Jamie Mick - Rotary Club of Holiday
Peter Vaka - Rotary Club of New Tampa Evening
Lynda Vinson - Rotary Club of Tarpon Springs

While the routine of the meeting was nothing new to those in attendance, the venue certainly was new and improved! Leonard Hall, the main assembly hall for the camp, has undergone a facelift that includes the installation of a projector, screen, and restrooms! Yes, for the first time in the camp's history, campers will not have to return to their cabins or other public buildings to find restroom facilities!

Visitors to the camp also toured the Publix Pavilion, which is also in the midst of major renovations. The newly-completed dropped ceiling tiles are in place and there are plans to completely refurbish this large pavilion for all types of activities for future campers. All the cabins have improved bedding, new floors, and a bright new paint job. Restrooms in all the cabins have been updated.



Thanks to Rotary members from various clubs, the grounds are in wonderful shape. As club members join forces for monthly workdays, the campgrounds always look beautiful. If you haven't visited the camp recently, you will be surprised and pleased with how these additions and improvements have enhanced the property. You'll be welcomed by Executive Director Jim Harmon and his wife Deb as well as Amos Redner, Maintenance Director. These are the folks who keep our camp running and in great condition for our special campers!



Cliff's Notes



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
District 6950



A message from Board President Cliff Snedeker

The mission of Rotary's Camp Florida, your camp, is to provide facilities for user groups sponsoring challenged campers to have a fully ADA compliant facility to support the experiences they need. We are committed to our facility, and with the support of Annual Member Rotary Clubs and individual and group donors, Rotary's Camp Florida is able to provide the facilities to make these dreams real.

In addition to the donations mentioned above, another very important way that these groups are able to participate in a true camping experience is for a Rotary Club, a group of Rotary Clubs or a Rotary District, to sponsor a group from your community to attend Rotary's Camp Florida. Several clubs are already doing this, and we can put you in contact with them to learn how to become a User Group Sponsor.

Most Rotary Clubs know who the Challenged Children's Sponsor groups are in your community. Please consider becoming a sponsor, allowing a new children's group to come to Rotary's Camp Florida. When you learn of a group in your community and want information of how to sponsor a group, just contact us and we will help.

In closing, I remind you that a donation to our Scholarships (\$25.00 per camper per night) helps to send a camper to Rotary's Camp Florida. A donation to our Endowment will benefit the campers at Rotary's Camp Florida through annual earnings from the Endowment. Contact the camp for more information on interest that you might have in making donations to the Camp.

WORKDAY WIZARDS

On the first Saturday of each month, one of our state's many Rotary Clubs plans a workday on the campus of Rotary's Camp Florida. It's a great way to provide a valuable service, enjoy a beautiful day outside, and help enhance the camping experience for our special little friends.

If your club is within two hours of Brandon, you can leave on Saturday morning, spend a few hours at the camp, then leave in plenty of time for whatever plans you have on Saturday evening.

If you're located too far away for a drive to and from Brandon to make sense, here's another option. Maybe your club could "sponsor" a workday. That means paying for coffee and donuts for workers, along with sandwiches and soft drinks for lunch. Or, you might provide supplies needed for specific projects, such as paint, mulch, or building materials specified by the Workday Chairman.



Workdays can be very special "bonding" times for Rotaract Clubs and their sponsors, as well as new members in your club. There's nothing like spending the day helping improve the camp to make you feel good...and you will feel VERY good when you see the results of a day's work!

For more information, please call the camp office at 813/654-4042.



SPOTLIGHT ON...JIM HARMON



Each issue of Campfire News spotlights one of our board members. Jim Harmon, Executive Director of Rotary's Camp Florida, is in the spotlight in this issue.

For almost five years Jim Harmon has been the RCF's Executive Director. With a rich background in management, Jim brought his expertise to our camp after taking over a failing business in Michigan, turning it around, and then selling it and moving to Florida.

A native of Dahlonega, Georgia, Jim was eager to return to a warmer climate. When he first moved to Florida, he worked at Walt Disney World for many years before taking on the position of Executive Property Director at a retirement community in Jacksonville. He managed the property successfully for three years before accepting the position with Rotary's Camp Florida.

During his years at RCF, Jim has supervised many projects to improve the grounds, update the camp buildings, and create an overall atmosphere that is always "friendly" to campers with special needs.

One especially exciting event during Jim's tenure was on February 5, 2013 when he welcomed a very special visitor...Rotary International President Sakuji Tanaka. It was a beautiful Florida day, and President Tanaka was very impressed as he toured the campus.



Anyone who visits Rotary's Camp Florida is welcomed warmly by Jim and Deb Harmon, who have been together for 16 years. Between them they have four children and eight grandchildren with another due to arrive by the end of this year. Jim is proud of his Cherokee Indian heritage.

When he's not involved with camps, Jim speaks to Rotary clubs all over the state. If you'd like to hear the message about Rotary's Camp Florida, please contact Jim directly at the camp or email Susan Schmitt, Communications Committee Chairman, at susschmitt@aol.com.



A Project of Rotary Clubs Throughout Florida

"Because We Care"

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