



Youth Rally Camp – An Experience of a Lifetime

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At the beginning of camp, T.M. would only wear loose, long sleeved shirts and baggy pants, no matter how hot it was outside; R.S. had always made excuses about why she could not join sleepovers with her friends; and B.H. would only dream about going on a date. By the end of camp, these three campers felt part of a community and socially at ease within it. T.M. was in T-shirts and shorts; R.S. had now done sleepovers with her new friends, and B.H. was ready to go home and date. These are only a few examples of the impact you will have on the lifelong changes that occur at camp and the memories that are created. Some kids who attend may have never been away from home before, never been with other kids who had ostomies, never played games with other kids in wheelchairs, and never felt like just another kid in the crowd. Camp provides them with so many positive experiences and you can be part of enriching their lives by volunteering to attend.

I, like some of you, had mixed emotions and trepidation when I signed up to be a WOC nurse at Youth Rally camp in 2008. I had never done pediatric nursing and I had only cared for adults as a WOC nurse, plus camp was in San Diego, across the country. I did not know anyone who was going or who had done this before. I knew the general information, i.e. that Youth Rally was a one week camp “to provide an environment for adolescents living with conditions of the bowel and bladder that encourages self-confidence and independent living.” Once at camp, I quickly realized that I was never alone and if health care challenges arose, it was a team effort where we always supported and learned from one another. Not only was there expertise among the health care volunteers, but also among the counselors (many who had been campers themselves), and many of the current campers. Physical, psychological, and social care was skillfully provided.

I imagined camp would be an experience of a lifetime for the campers, but I never realized it would also be one for me. Even now, thinking back to the self-confidence the kids gained and the friendships that they formed makes me smile. The trips to the beach and going in the water that was a first for many, roller skating even while in a wheelchair, educational sessions, chat time where issues of dating and clothing were typical topics, talent shows, camp fires, and many other fun experiences filled the days. The dance on the last night of camp was filled with hugs and tears...we had all grown, learned and been part of a very special community of people. The time shared and the lessons learned will be built upon and remain in our hearts forever.