

A LETTER from the HEART

Camp del Corazon's quarterly newsletter for campers, parents and friends

Summer 2004

Leadership Weekend — An Invaluable Experience

Our first Leadership Program was held over the weekend of April 23rd-25th. This program is designed for young adults age 18-25 who are no longer eligible to attend Camp del Corazon as summer campers. The goals we set for this program were to maintain involvement with Camp del Corazon for past campers; promote growth in and understanding about transitional issues; ensure positive discussion of issues around living as an adult with heart disease; and to deliver resources in Health, Education and Employment in the community.

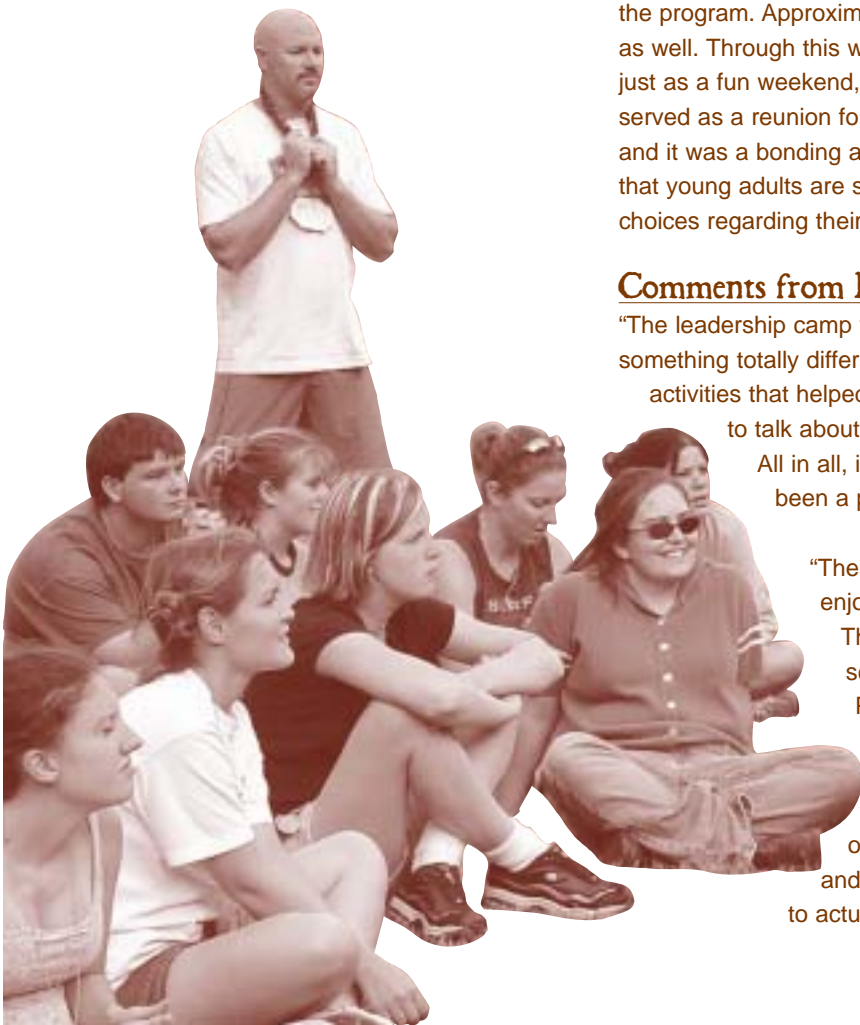
Our attendance expectations were exceeded, and we had 33 participants in the program. Approximately 25 volunteers oversaw and assisted in the program as well. Through this weekend we realized that the value of this program was not just as a fun weekend, but that it also provided tools for the participants to use; it served as a reunion for some and an opportunity to make new friends for life; and it was a bonding and growing experience. We learned from this experience that young adults are searching for answers and have the desire to make better choices regarding their heart disease.

Comments from Leadership Participants

"The leadership camp was an amazing experience! I loved the fact that it was something totally different from an ordinary camp session. I enjoyed the new activities that helped to bring out our leadership skills. It was also helpful to talk about how our conditions affect our lives as young adults. All in all, it was a weekend full of fun and I am happy to have been a part of it."

— Briana, AZ

"The leadership Program was a great success for me. I enjoyed the company I was in, but I enjoyed what we learned. The Program helped me become a better leader in work, school and at home with my family. The leadership Program is a program that helped me and some of the friends that I met. Also it is great being around and living with others that have heart disease. See, being with people that understand what you go through on a day-to-day basis is awesome because they understand and sometimes our friends don't. I enjoyed camp and I hope to actually be a counselor next year. — Carrie





First annual Gala del Sol exceeds expectations

On Saturday, April 3rd, Camp del Corazon held its very first black tie event – the Gala del Sol at the Globe Theater at Universal Studios. As Camp had not previously done anything of this caliber, we were uncertain of what to expect. I am so pleased and proud to say that the event was such an enormous success – we surpassed both our attendance and fundraising goals – unheard of for a first year event! In fact, we had over 300 guests!



We were delighted to have honored Dr. Hillel Laks and also the Cast and Producers of the NBC drama *ER* for increasing the awareness of congenial heart disease and for their sensitive portrayal of the families affected by the disease.

I would like to personally thank everyone who worked so hard on the event to make it as special as it was! Everybody looked fantastic, the room was beautiful and the night was filled with magic. If you haven't already done so, please check out the website for pictures from the night. And mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual event to be held on April 9th, 2005. We are looking forward to another successful and fun event in the spring!

Ronya Waters
Director of Development

A note from Taggs about staffing

This is going to be another great year at camp. We are celebrating our 10th year and without all the volunteers who support the efforts of Camp del Corazon we could have never done it. This year we have a record number of returning staff. I would like to thank all of you for your continuing to take time out of your lives to make Camp del Corazon the magical place that it has become for children with heart disease.

Taggs

P.S. Get your forms in!



Annual Family Weekend provides fun and knowledge for the whole family

On Saturday, June 5th, The American Heart Association and Camp del Corazon held the 4th Annual Family Weekend at the Universal Sheraton Hotel in Universal City.

Camp Volunteers took over 200 children into Universal Studios/Hollywood for a day of fun while their families spent the day with L.A.'s experts in the field of congenital heart disease.

We again have received excellent feedback on this year's event and great suggestions on what to offer at future symposiums.



Mark Your Calendar Now!

Next Year's Event
May 14th, 2005

Getting creative to raise money for Camp

Recently, Colleen Holder helped with the Westminster "Macy's Community Shopping Day" to raise money for camp.

Thinking along the lines of the show "The Apprentice," Colleen contacted local vendors to pitch in some incentives to help sell tickets. She came up with some great ideas, including being invited by LA Fitness to host a table in front of their club for two nights! She and her crew had mini drawings offering chances to win a Ride-Along with a Sheriff's Deputy, AMC Movie Tickets or a Complimentary Day Pass to Burke Williams Day Spa! Everyone who bought tickets was also given comp tokens to Dave and Buster's and two week memberships to LA Fitness!

"It is always inspiring to see the community come together and we were honored to have a chance to represent and raise a little money for Camp del Corazon!"

Kool-Aid & Hawaiian Punch

She isn't sure if she's quite ready for "The Apprentice," but she sure had fun! People were very giving and seemed excited to shop for a cause! There were stories of people who knew of someone with heart disease and there were a couple of people interested in volunteering for Camp!



A mother shares her wisdom

This year's Universal Symposium was definitely among the best we have had! The speakers were all very enlightening and the kids had a great time at the park.

One of the panel speakers was Chris Atherton, mother of 13 children, 6 of which have heart disease, 2 of which are campers, and one is a counselor. Below are excerpts from her speech in which she shared things that her family has learned over the years.

- We have learned it's okay to get a 2nd, 3rd, & 4th opinion, because NOTHING is more important than our child's life.
- We have learned that when someone is talking about TOF, PA, SPH, VSD, ASD, & PDA they are sadly not talking about alphabet soup.
- We have found that somehow we can keep going long after we think we can't.
- We have learned it is hard for a child to make and keep friends when they miss a lot of school.
- Along time ago we learned not to ask "why" because we have found there is no answer.
- We have learned a child can look really good on the outside and be really sick on the inside.
- We have found people are going to stare at a very healthy looking 11 year old in a stroller.
- We have finally learned that we can "survive" the 4 days while the girls are at camp.
- We have learned how to get oxygen on an airplane, send records for a second opinion, and seek out specialists and new treatments.
- We have found that airline personnel don't expect a child to need oxygen.
- I have learned to answer the question "How are you?" with "good" even though I am hurting inside.
- We have found our life is very different in many ways from our neighbors.
- We have learned life goes on no matter how sad, confused or afraid we are.
- We have learned there is a way to celebrate life in the middle of uncertainty.

Thank you, Chris, for sharing your wisdom with us all.

Donate your old cell phone

We are excited to have teamed up with Phones 4 Charity – a national program designed to remove discarded wireless phones from the country's environment while directly benefiting charitable organizations. So, if you have any old cell phones laying around, please send them to the camp office so that we can turn them into money for camp!

Summer edition!