

Camp Mack Hosting Indiana Deaf Camp

Sarah Wright

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Camp Alexander Mack, Milford, is hosting Indiana Deaf Camp this week, July 16-20, offering deaf children and their hearing siblings plenty of opportunities for fun. Kids come from all over the U.S. and even the world. Many of these campers have made it to the camp through a fund created by the Indiana Lions Speech and Hearing Inc., one of the Lions Club's statewide projects.

Deaf Camp started in 1973 at Camp Adventure before moving to Camp Crosley in 1999 and Camp Mack in 2001. The camp was founded by Grace Nunery and is currently coordinated by Barbi Stenacker.

The Indiana Lions have been involved with the camp for approximately 20 years after Stenacker first made contact with Boyd Mazingo with the Greentown Lions Club. From there, fellow Greentown Lions Club member Tom Jones brought up the camp to Speech and Hearing.

Since then, the Indiana Lions have become a major contributor, providing camperships for several Indiana kids who are in need of financial assistance and want to attend the camp. This year alone Speech and Hearing has provided \$7,000 toward camper scholarships.

Lakeville Lions Club and Speech and Hearing member, Dave Court, and his daughter, Debbie Barkey, a special education teacher in the Wa-Neer School Corporation, regularly visit Deaf Camp to check on the kids. This year they brought Carmel Lions Club members Lee and Jane Flower, and Jerry Wright, speech and hearing trustee from the Syracuse Lions Club. Lee currently serves as the chairman of Speech and Hearing.

"We've come up every year just to visit and see what the kids are doing," said Court.

Approximately 113 kids turned out for Deaf Camp this year. Upon arrival, the kids are divided into groups based on age; this year there were only five groups since teen enrollment was down. Approximately 70 volunteers then make sure their stay is a fun experience.

Together with their groups and the volunteers, the kids will complete a variety of activities from swimming in Waubee Lake and playing in a mud pit to completing crafts and canoeing. One of the newest activities for older kids is archery. Deaf Camp also welcomed Jungle John and his Silly Safari show this year and the kids were introduced to several animals including an anteater and armadillo through the program.

"They are a very happy bunch because they are with their peers," said Court. "Watching them interact is fun."

For many kids, Deaf Camp provides a place to be in the summer where they can communicate with peers, have fun and learn. Larry Leonard, who has been with Deaf Camp for 18 years, notes some of the kids' parents barely sign.

Court recounted meeting a little deaf boy who had come home for the summer while out delivering summer lunches as part of another Lions Club project. His mother had never heard of the camp through her son's school and Court



Kids at Deaf Camp participate in a wide array of activities, which are cycled each year to include new things. One of the activities includes wall climbing and zip lining. (Photo by Sarah Wright)

was quick to tell her about it. The boy attended this year's camp with a campership.

Camp staff and Speech and Hearing hope to increase awareness of the camp in Indiana communities as well as in local Lions Clubs throughout Indiana.

Cutlines

UPWARD — Kids at Deaf Camp participate in a wide array of activities, which are cycled each year to include new things. One of the activities includes wall climbing and zip lining.

ZIP LINING – Jay Rose from Canada started coming to Deaf Camp when he was just 4 years old; now, he is 21 and serving as one of the many volunteers that keep the camp running. Several other kids have enjoyed the experience that they, too, have come back as volunteers.

Comments

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