

Three Young People Receive 2013 CHADD Summer Camp Award

by Karen Sampson Hoffman, MA

THREE YOUNG PEOPLE had adventures of a lifetime this summer, thanks to CHADD's Summer Camp Award Fund program. The three recipients of the 2013 awards attended specialized camps in California, Wyoming, and Ontario, Canada.

Summer camp is a tradition for many children and their families, including those with ADHD. But finding a camp that meets their specific needs can be difficult, and the camps are often much more expensive than the average scouting or adventure camp. Social-skills programs often take place in classroom-like situations that don't necessary include adventures in the great outdoors. Summer camps and summer treatment programs designed for children affected by ADHD find innovative ways of combining the adventure of summer camp with the academic or social skills many children need to be successful.

The CHADD Summer Camp Award Fund was created to enable children and teens with ADHD to attend a camp appropriate for their needs and to join the summer camp tradition—including s'mores.



Fourteen-year-old **Sam Levine Richardson** participated in SOAR's California expedition. Before leaving for camp, Sam said he was excited to spend time with other teenage boys who have similar experiences coping with ADHD. "I'm hoping to have fun and to be a part of a community," he said. "The three-day backpacking trip sounds fun and I'm looking forward to rock climbing and snorkeling." Sam was excited about the opportunity to climb trees and hike through a rocky terrain with his new friends—doing "bro" things as a band of brothers, he said. At home, Sam enjoys spending time with his younger brother and sister and is active in his church's youth group.

"I'm just thrilled," said his mother, Heidi Levine. "I'm so happy he's getting to go to camp. He loves the outdoors. He loves being out there in nature." Sam is becoming interested in football and weightlifting while making the transition from middle school student

to high school freshman. Levine sees her son advancing towards adulthood and is glad that he has the chance to experience camp during this time of life. "I see this as an opportunity for him to learn to rely on himself even more, to really grow," she said.



Brianna O'Malley, age twelve, is a violinist and plays right field in softball. She spent a month of her summer vacation at Camp Kodiak in Ontario. She was eagerly anticipating the sports and the camp newspaper. "I'm looking forward to meeting new people," Brianna said. Camp Kodiak caught her interest because of the combination of camping activities and academic skills, along with an emphasis on learning coping skills for ADHD symptoms. "It had a fun looking mix of activities and academics. Academics are important to me."

Her mother, Anne O'Malley, was thrilled to learn Brianna was selected and couldn't wait to share the good news. "I just couldn't believe it," she said. "I actually called the school and told her right away. I was excited to have the opportunity to let her have the independence that she really needs. It's an environment where the difference will be positive."

Ten-year-old **Taylor Freeman** planned to go horseback riding during his adventure at SOAR's Wyoming location. His school counselor, Nicole Gerber, is a SOAR alumna and encouraged him to apply for the camp and the funding. "I haven't ever been on a horse before and it looked fun," said Taylor. "I'm going to take lots of pictures of the sur-



roundings and of me on my horse. I'm going to mail them out to some of my teachers and my counselor." Taylor's eighteen-day trip included an overnight wilderness camping and trail rides in Yellowstone National Park, along with learning how to care for horses.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Taylor's mother, Kristina Funkhouser. "When he brought this idea home, I said, 'Taylor, there's no way we can afford it.' He said there's this scholarship program. So I said if he gets this scholarship, he could go. We're really glad he gets to go to camp." Funkhouser credited school counselor Gerber with helping her son through the application process. "I am so excited to watch Taylor grow and experience a program that has meant so much to me," said Gerber.

The CHADD Summer Camp Award Fund program accepts applications from children and teenagers with a parent or a guardian who is a current CHADD member. Awardees select a summer camp from among the program's eligible camps. This year, the fund provided up to \$6,500 toward camp tuition, travel, and camping gear expenses.

Campers benefit from the experience of summer camp through making new friends and developing confidence in themselves as they hone new skills. Eligible camps focus their program on the needs of young people affected by ADHD, teaching the social skills and coping techniques that help them to be successful in school and daily life.

The fund was established to help young people with ADHD who would benefit from the camp experience but whose families find the high cost of a specialized camp prohibitive. Since 2006, the program has sent twenty-six young people to camp or specialized summer treatment programs. The fund was made possible this year through donations from Janssen Pharmaceuticals and the Toys"R"Us Children's Fund, Inc. 📍

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