

Inclusive Camping Experience (ICE) at Berwick

Berwick is unlike any other place on earth. Many families with people who have disabilities often speak of Berwick being a refuge where everyone is cherished. Where the gifts each individual has to share with the community is emphasized. In many ways Berwick lives "inclusion".

As parents and friends of people who have intellectual disabilities we have seen some of the ways that Berwick shines as an example of inclusivity and also where some improvements would benefit everyone. Maybe you are a parent who would like to attend Bible Study but cannot go unless someone accompanies your teenage son to the youth program. Perhaps you no longer have the ability to "loop" and would love to have someone come and visit you on your "stoop". Are you a caregiver/parent who would love to have a few hours of respite for personal time?

The goal of Inclusive Camping is to continue to create a camping experience where everyone feels that they are a valued member of the community. We want people with disabilities and their caregivers to find Berwick Camp a place of renewal, fellowship and inclusion. With this in mind we are trying three new initiatives this year:

Berwick Buddies: This is a peer visitation program. It is inevitable that some campers with intellectual or physically disabilities or limitations find it more difficult to interact with peers due a variety of issues. This program would match up volunteers with these campers who would commit to visiting them in their campsite several times during the camp. For example, a teenage youth may volunteer to visit with another teenage youth who finds it difficult to "hang out" in the traditional Berwick style or an adult man shares an ice-cream with another man who can no longer make the trip to the canteen. This program has the potential to build new relationships. We will do our best to match up people.

Respite Provider: to provide accompaniment for campers with intellectual or physical disabilities so that they (or caregivers) are able to attend programming or have some personal time. For example, pairing a child with Down syndrome with a volunteer who would accompany them to the VBS each day so the child's parents could attend adult programs.

- **Volunteers:** this position may require more specific abilities. You will be contacted to explore issues such as your abilities, your experience and your availability. Based on the information we gather we will recommend a match and we will put you in touch with the family prior to camp so together you can decide if and how this match will develop.
- **Participants:** sign up on the registration form and the more specific you can be about what you are looking for, the better. For example, "I would like a youth Berwick buddy to come and visit with my teenage son who has an intellectual disability" or "I would like someone to accompany my hearing impaired daughter to VBS". You will be contacted to explore this further and then we will attempt to match you with someone we feel meets your needs. At that point the ball is in your court so to speak... you can contact them and make any arrangements you are comfortable doing. It is not our role to make any decisions, but just to put people in contact with each other.

Advocacy Group for Inclusion: We will have a group meeting for anyone interested in this topic one afternoon during Berwick. During this time people can make suggestions of any changes that could help improve the camp. For example: the need for a "family" bathroom so that a mother could help her adult son who has a disability with his personal care. We will take these suggestions to the camp executive on behalf of this advocacy group.

This is the first year for a program like this, although these types of initiatives have been happening organically for years. We recognize that some people find it very easy to have the assistance they require, while others, particularly newer campers, find it much more difficult. As with most new ideas, it will take time to see how this will work so please be patient. We are always open to feedback so contact us with any questions or suggestions.

During camp, we can also be contacted should any concerns, suggestions or questions arise. We are dedicated to making Berwick Camp as inclusive as possible.

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I would like to be contacted about BEING a Berwick Buddy.			
Name:	Age:	Phone #:	E-mail:
Experience:			

***You will be contacted by Erin or Shannon prior to camp.**

I would like to be contacted about HAVING a Berwick Buddy.			
Name:	Age:	Phone #:	E-mail:
I would like a buddy who (visits me, takes me for icecream etc)...			

***You will be contacted by Erin or Shannon prior to camp.**

I would like to be contacted about providing RESPITE.			
Name:	Age:	Phone #:	E-mail:
Experience:			

***You will be contacted by Erin or Shannon prior to camp.**

I would like to be contacted about REQUIRING Respite Care.			
Name:	Age:	Phone #:	E-mail:
Needs:			

***You will be contacted by Erin or Shannon prior to camp.**