



For immediate release

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DIVAS Rule the Runway at The Woodlands

Wexford, PA – The Woodlands will host its annual DIVAS Weekend Friday, January 27 through Saturday, January 28 at their 52-acre campus in Wexford, PA. The Woodlands' staff and special guests will work with participants – girls and young women ages 8 to 29, with disability or chronic illness – to promote self-confidence, feelings of self-worth, and diversity of beauty.

During the sleepover weekend, each participant receives a hair and makeup make-over, the opportunity to craft her own pageant sash, fashion headshots, and runway coaching. Unlike a beauty pageant, the program is non-competitive, focusing on displays of personality, humor, and empowerment. "The atmosphere of DIVAS Weekend is built around empowerment and support. We encourage the participants to celebrate internal and external attributes that make them feel both beautiful and strong," said Jesse Solomon, Woodlands' Director of Programs.

Special guest, Miss Wheelchair America 2012, Josie Badger, PhD, will hold a "girl talk" session with program participants on Friday evening. The session will include motivational points on achieving dreams and goals.

Woodlands' DIVAS culminates in a runway show, emceed by local author of *The Happier Autism Family*, Jen Forsyth. The runway show will be held in the Woodlands Activities Center, 134 Shenot Road, Wexford, PA at 5:00pm on Saturday, January 28, followed by a reception. The event is open to the public and free of charge. Visitors are encouraged to attend the runway show and participate by cheering the young ladies on as they walk down the runway.

Media is invited to attend the multiple aspects of the Weekend with RSVP. Please submit reservations for attendance to the Program Marketing Coordinator by Wednesday, January 25.

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About The Woodlands

The Woodlands mission is to enrich the lives of children and adults with disability and chronic illness by providing adapted therapeutic programs that support and strengthen the development of skills in socialization, creative expression, environmental awareness, recreation, and spirituality at its fully-accessible Wexford, PA facility. Further information and a schedule of Woodlands' programming are available at www.mywoodlands.org.



Molly Merhaut receives a rose as she makes her way down The Woodlands' runway in the 2016 DIVA Weekend.