



For immediate release

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DIVAS Rule the Runway at The Woodlands

Wexford, PA – The Woodlands will host its annual DIVAS Weekend, from Friday, January 26 through Saturday, January 27, 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 the diversity of beauty.

During the sleepover weekend, each participant will receive a hair and makeup makeover, 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 Miss Wheelchair Pennsylvania 2017, Claire Senita. Senita commented on the importance of empowerment for girls and young women, especially those with disability, "I think it is so important to empower others, especially young women with disabilities, to instill confidence in them and their ABILITY. There are so many negative stereotypes towards people with disabilities that it sometimes becomes easy to believe about yourself, especially when you are young and have an impressionable mind. I know, because I've been there. It is so important to empower and create a positive mindset because there is SO MUCH that people, especially people with disabilities can do, when they have the confidence in their abilities."

The runway show will be held in the Woodlands Activities Center, 134 Shenot Road, Wexford, PA at 7:00pm on Saturday, January 27, followed by a reception. **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 24.**

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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.



Riley Whiting makes her way down The Woodlands' runway during last year's DIVA Weekend.