

capable

AUTUMN 2017

Able

A seasonal publication by
The Woodlands, celebrating
the marvelous abilities of
everyone we serve.

ready

strong





Impacting the Whole Family

“My husband and I are now able to plan and complete home tasks that we couldn’t do if our son was home. We have actually made several date nights, which was unheard of prior. We also seem to have a much more positive outlook when dealing with the daily challenge of having a special needs child who requires such attention. I know we look forward to our son’s camps as much as he does. Having enrolled him in The Woodlands has changed the entire atmosphere of our home for the better.”

Joann, mother of participant

Rest and relaxation are vital for a healthy body and mind; even more so for those serving as caregivers for a loved one. Yet self-care is often neglected by caregivers for a myriad of reasons, including feelings of shame and guilt. The Woodlands strives to change the way caregivers perceive respite.

“Parents often feel guilty because they feel like they shouldn’t need a break from their child. They feel like they shouldn’t need to drop their child off for peace of mind,” Jesse Solomon, Director of Programs at The Woodlands, said. “But you can’t take care of anyone else if you don’t take time to care for yourself.”

Solomon often refers caregivers to Hope Grows, a local nonprofit organization that helps to provide an environment that sup-

ports and maintains caregivers’ physical, psychological and spiritual well-being, because she strongly values their mission and the tight network of support it encourages. She also encourages caregivers to find a balance between care, family time and responsibilities and personal hobbies.

With year-round programming, The Woodlands’ goal is to help families, like Joann’s, to find their own happy medium. On average, participants visit The Woodlands at least once a month. “As participants are working on themselves through their participation in Woodlands programs, I encourage caregivers to focus on their own quality of life,” Solomon said.



NEW PROGRAM PROFILE:

C'AMP

Weekend Retreat

“My son returned from his first weekend with tales of an imaginative and ‘awesome’ spy adventure led by talented staff who kept him and his fellow campers engaged in solving the mystery. The counselors also took time to connect with him individually in fun and engaging ways like brushing their teeth to his favorite classical music. He felt so supported he tried archery for the first time despite feeling too self-conscious to try it elsewhere. He is looking forward to attending more weekend retreats and hopes to see both returning and new campers next time.”

Yetta W., parent of participant

With limited recreational opportunities for children and young adults with limb difference, The Woodlands was more than excited to introduce the newest program, C'AMP Weekend Retreat.

The C'AMP Weekend Retreat program is designed especially for participants ages 6-18 and mentors ages 19 and over with limb difference or amputations. C'AMP Weekend Retreat participants will connect with peers and mentors with shared experiences while partaking in exciting adventures on The Woodlands' 52-acre campus. C'AMPers will enjoy traditional camp activities, such as swimming, archery, zip-line rides, arts & crafts, and other seasonal activities. Peers and mentors cheer on and learn from one another, making friends and trying new things in a supportive environment that encourages a healthy lifestyle for all ability levels.

For more information, visit www.mywoodlands.org.



Planning for the Future

YOUNG PEOPLE with disabilities and their families often see limited opportunities after high school as there is no clear roadmap for a successful transition into adulthood.

But one local initiative is looking to change that. 21 and Able, an initiative of the United Way of Allegheny County, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, and local school districts, family members, youth and community, created the Planning for the Future Checklist. The checklist is designed to support youth with disabilities, as well as their families and IEP team members, to ensure they are reviewing all aspects of transition planning at age appropriate intervals. The checklist begins at age 14 and provides direction and guidance through age 21.

For more information and to access the checklist, visit https://uwsdpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015_Checklist.pdf

Interactive Mobile Health and Rehabilitation

Monitoring and maintaining a chronic illness requires constant vigilance from the patient. While self-care can produce improved outcomes for these types of patients, traditional methods of self-care have their limitations.

That's where iMHere 2.0, a mHealth platform promoting clinician-guided self-care to patients with chronic diseases, looks to change existing methods.

iMHere's internet accessibility provides a secure bridge between patients' smartphone applications and a web-based clinician portal, and successfully empowers patients to perform subjective self-care and preventative measures, such as medication management, skincare, exercise and nutrition. The app was designed to send monitorial data to the portal and also receive output regarding self-care regimens as recommended by the attending clinician. The combination of

interactive, real-time medical monitoring with patient control offers a powerful, unique solution for patients living with chronic illnesses where cognitive and physical disabilities present significant barriers to effective self-care.

"iMHere 2.0 is designed to be appealing to all ages and incorporates support from caregivers and the community. The iMHere suite of apps helps individuals to proactively manage their conditions, which can have a positive effect on medical and personal outcomes," shares Roxanna M. Bendixen, PhD, OTR/L, Assistant Professor and Program Director, MS Program, University of Pittsburgh Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

iMHere 2.0 is currently under a research study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh. To participate, or to learn more about iMHere, visit <http://www.imhere.pitt.edu/about/>.





Hands-on Experience

The Woodlands offers more than countless program opportunities for its participants. It's also becoming a leading training and referral source for students from colleges and universities throughout the region.

Through collaborative relationships with academic institutions such as Duquesne University, Slippery Rock University and the University of Pittsburgh – to name a few – The Woodlands has become the ideal training ground for students in health, education or human service fields of study.

In order to prepare the summer program staff, The Woodlands developed Camp Academy, an intensive, one-week training course that occurs the week prior to the start of summer programming. The goal of Camp Academy is to develop and produce the next generation of young professionals serving our families. During Camp Academy, professionals including physical therapists, registered nurses and behavior specialists conduct workshops specific to their areas of expertise so that trainees can learn techniques and strategies that will ensure the optimal care and safety of those we serve.

“From a parent and professor’s perspective, the students who go through The Woodlands’ staff training and development program are second to none. I have received such great feedback from school districts when graduates get jobs in their respective fields regarding how well prepared they are, and I really attribute that preparation to the experience students gain from working as part of The Woodlands’ program staff,” says Joseph Merhaut, EdD, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education Slippery Rock University.

An average of 55 students are hired as seasonal program staff every year, with summer staff living in the counselor dormitory on The Woodlands’ campus for 11 weeks. Student trainees also undergo leadership, team building, conflict and time management training, all considered important aspects not just for the success of the individual experience, but also for the success of the group experience.

For more information on Camp Academy or seasonal employment at The Woodlands, visit www.mywoodlands.org.



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Our Mission

To enrich the lives of children and adults
with disability and chronic illness.

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