



***For immediate release***

***DATE 1-7-19***

**Contact:** Heidi Matthews  
Program Marketing Coordinator  
The Woodlands  
724-935-5470  
412-608-6120 Mobile  
[hmatthews@woodlandsfoundation.org](mailto:hmatthews@woodlandsfoundation.org)

## **The Woodlands Empowers Girls and Young Women to Embrace Their Inner DIVA**

**Wexford, PA – The Woodlands will host its annual DIVAs Weekend Friday, February 1, through Saturday, February 2, at its 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 a disability or chronic illness – to promote empowerment, self-care, and the beauty of diversity.

During the sleepover weekend, each participant will have the option to receive a makeup and hair makeover, craft her own pageant sash, take fashion headshots, and receive runway coaching. Unlike a beauty pageant, the program is noncompetitive, focusing on displays of personality, humor, and empowerment. "Everyone deserves to embrace their full self-worth. Through DIVA weekend, The Woodlands empowers the participants to realize their own self-worth and encourages them to support their peers," said Tanner Brown, Woodlands DIVA Coordinator. "This year during DIVA, we are placing a special focus on self-care. Self-care and empowerment go hand-in-hand. When we love our body, we are able to put more love out into the world."

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.

In preparation for the event, The Woodlands will be hosting "Barry's Boutique" on its campus the Saturday prior to the DIVA Weekend Retreat. Each registered DIVA participant may schedule an individual appointment to try on and choose a complimentary gown in the pop-up shop from the extensive collection of dresses donated by community members, Mr. Nico Engelbrecht and Ms. Beth Yankel. Participants select their own DIVA outfit to inspire feelings of confidence, beauty, and empowerment. Various styles, including gowns selected from "Barry's Boutique" to sportswear, cowgirl boots, or biker jackets, will be featured in the culmination of the DIVA weekend during a runway show.

The runway show will be held in The Woodlands Activity Center, 134 Shenot Road, Wexford, PA at 7:00pm on Saturday, February 2, followed by a reception. "Barry's Boutique" pop-up shop will be held in The Jewel in the Woods Meditation Center on The Woodlands campus on Saturday, January 26, from 10:00am until 4:00pm. **Media is invited to attend the "Barry's Boutique" pop-up shop and multiple aspects of the DIVA Weekend Retreat, with RSVP to Program Marketing Coordinator, Heidi Matthews.**

###

### **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](http://www.mywoodlands.org).



2018 Woodlands DIVA participant Kaylee Turner prepares for the runway show with the help of a volunteer.