



For immediate release

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

Wexford, PA – The Woodlands will host its annual DIVA Retreat Weekend Friday, February 28, through Sunday, March 1, 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 weekend, each participant will have the option to receive a makeup and hair makeover, craft her own pageant accessories, take fashion headshots, and receive runway coaching. Unlike a beauty pageant, the program is noncompetitive, focusing on displays of personality, humor, and empowerment.

"The atmosphere of DIVA weekend is built around empowerment. We want to create an event where everyone has the chance 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 Jesse Solomon, Woodlands Director of Programs. "This year during DIVA, we are putting a special focus on self-care. Self-care and empowerment go hand-in-hand: you are the only person you need to be good enough for."

Special guest, Mindy Jo Miller will attend various portions of the weekend and emcee the runway show on Sunday. Miller made history by becoming the first ever Miss Pennsylvania for America 2019, a pageant designed for women who are single (never married, divorced, widowed or legally separated). "One of the things that I love the most about working within my community is the ability that it gives me to make an impact, whether it is small or large," says Miller.

In preparation for the runway shows, 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 2:00pm on Sunday, March 1, followed by a reception. **Media is invited to attend multiple aspects of the DIVA Weekend Retreat, with RSVP to Woodlands Special Events & Corporate Relations Coordinator, Mikayla DiCesare.**

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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.



2019 Woodlands DIVA participant Riley Whiting prepares for the runway show with the help of a volunteer.