

Able

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

THE
WOODLANDS

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

SPRING 2025

The Woodlands Continues Partnership WITH NATIONAL CHARITY LEAGUE



For the past several years, The Woodlands has partnered with the Pittsburgh chapter of the National Charity League (NCL) – a group of mothers and daughters who have come together in a commitment to community service, leadership development and cultural experiences.

Volunteers from the National Charity League play a key role in two of The Woodlands' most anticipated events each year, **Fall Fest** and the **DIVA** (Dreams, Inspiration, Vision & Advocacy) **Retreat Weekend**.

During The Woodlands' annual Fall Fest event – held each October at The Woodlands Campus for Woodlands' families and the local community – the women and girls of NCL have generously volunteered to run, and donated all the art supplies for, a pumpkin decorating station.


This fun, festive, and free activity is a staple during fall fest and provides attendees of all ages with a creative souvenir from their autumn afternoon.

"We absolutely love volunteering with The Woodlands," said Jill Danish, Vice President of Philanthropy for the Pittsburgh Linxx chapter of the National Charity League. "Our volunteers have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, expressing how much they enjoy their time at The Woodlands," Ms. Danish continued. "It's heartwarming to see so many smiling faces."

Over the last two years, volunteers from the NCL have also played a pivotal role with the Woodlands' DIVA Weekend Retreat. This beloved residential program – held for individuals ages 16-35 – celebrates the principles of self-love and care, as well as the diversity of beauty both inside and out.

During this empowering sleepover weekend, participants experience mindfulness and meditation exercises, expressive arts projects like jewelry making, and enjoy manicures. The retreat culminates in a runway show where DIVAS get to "strut their stuff" and sparkle down the runway for their families, friends and program volunteers, which include approximately 30 volunteers from the NCL, who assist the DIVAs with their hair and makeup pre-show, and donate "Self-Care Bags" full of goodies for all participants.

"Both events have brought so much joy to our volunteers," Ms. Danish said. "They especially love seeing the smiles on the faces of the campers and knowing we've made a positive impact."

"Volunteering at The Woodlands has also had a meaningful impact on my daughter," Ms. Danish continued. "She has grown more confident working with individuals with disabilities, and genuinely looks forward to each experience," Ms. Danish shared. "We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with The Woodlands, and we look forward to continuing to contribute to such a wonderful organization." 



A WORK TRADE MOVEMENT WITH ATTACK THEATRE



Kristen Link, The Woodlands' new Senior Director of Operations, and Jenna Bowman, Creative Arts and Clubs Manager, led two professional development workshops at the Attack Theatre - an organization focused on fusing modern dance, original live music and interdisciplinary art forms to create beautiful and engaging dance performances.

Kristen and Jenna's workshops - designed for the teaching artists of Attack Theatre - discussed accessible arts education including affirmative and empowering language; adaptations and accommodations in the classroom setting; creating an inclusive performance space; and sensory-friendly performances.

"I am truly grateful for the care and expertise The Woodlands team brought to the Attack Theatre space during the professional development sessions. Our team was excited to participate and left

feeling empowered to bring what they learned into our creative practice and school programs," said Brittany Tague, Arts in Education Manager for Attack Theatre. "The Woodlands team made the sessions even more impactful by customizing them to reflect the themes and demographics of our learners, which directly influenced our programming that began the following week."

In return, Attack Theatre will host two creative movement dance workshops with participants during The Woodlands 2025 music camps.

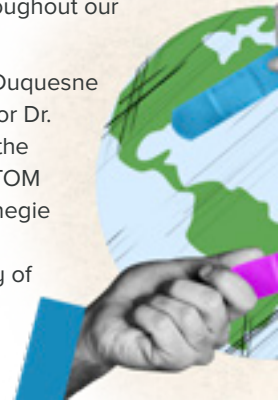
"We are thrilled to continue building a collaborative relationship with the team at Attack Theatre," said Kristen Link, Senior Director of Operations for The Woodlands. "Both organizations share a common goal in providing high quality, immersive arts experiences for individuals with disabilities. We cannot wait to welcome their teaching artists back to campus this summer!"

LOCAL COLLEGE S Summertime FOR PART

Tikkun Olam is a Hebrew phrase that translates to "repairing the world." This concept is central in Judaism and encourages individuals to actively work towards and contribute to improving themselves, their communities and the world. These actions can include social activism, advocating for justice, addressing societal issues, and a general focus on caring for the well-being of society as a whole.

Putting this concept into action, the Tikkun Olam Makers (TOM) organization was founded to create and disseminate creative and affordable solutions to challenges many people living with disabilities, the elderly, and the poor face each day. From a dice box designed to help people lacking fine motor skills play dice-based games, to a light weight, 3D printed custom arm prosthesis for below-the-elbow amputees, TOM is committed to utilizing technology and innovation to allow every person access to affordable solutions for their needs. The Pittsburgh community is lucky to have several active TOM chapters throughout our universities.

Spearheaded by Duquesne University professor Dr. Richard Simpson, the local chapters of TOM at Duquesne, Carnegie Mellon University, and The University of



TUDENTS TAKE ON re Surprise ICIPANTS

Pittsburgh are joining together on a very special project for The Woodlands' Summer Camp Participants this year... adaptive squirt guns! A summer camp staple all participants will now be able to enjoy.

"The TOM chapters at Duquesne and CMU collaborated on a switch-adapted toy drive in December that was really successful, and were excited to take on a similar project in the spring that would have a bigger benefit on kids," said Dr. Richard Simpson.

"I had experience working on adapted squirt guns when I was a graduate student, so taking on this project for TOM's maker day session seemed like a great project that would have a lot of impact."

"We can't wait to surprise our summer camp participants with these adapted squirt guns this summer," said Nicole Hicks, Recreational Program Manager at

The Woodlands. "The modifications are sure to get everyone excited, and we can't wait to see participants try them out, especially when they get the chance to soak their counselors!" Ms. Hicks continued. "It's going to bring a whole new level of fun to the camp experience."



N E W S



THE WOODLANDS GOLF CLASSIC

The Woodlands' 25th Annual Golf Classic will be held on **Monday, June 2, 2025** at Butler Country Club. This year, The Woodlands will proudly honor **Courtney Myhrum** with the Spirit of Golf Award.

The Spirit of Golf Award is presented to a distinguished individual or company that has demonstrated an extraordinary level of personal, professional, and philanthropic excellence both on and off the course. The award was created to capture the essence of the great legacy of giving that is associated with the game of golf.



Amateur golf legend Carol Semple Thompson, who received the inaugural Spirit of Golf Award 25 years ago, will present Courtney with the award at this year's event.

Courtney Myhrum has dedicated decades to advancing the game of golf through her exceptional leadership and volunteerism with the USGA, serving at more than 50 championships, including U.S. Opens and U.S. Women's Amateurs.

In 2024, she officiated as a referee for the Women's Olympic Championship in Paris and as a starter for the U.S. Senior Women's Open at Fox Chapel Golf Club. Beyond her work with the USGA, Courtney serves as a board member of the American Junior Golf Association, underscoring her commitment to fostering the next generation of golfers.

WELCOME NEW EPB MEMBERS

The Woodlands Emerging Professionals Board (EPB), formed in 2022, is comprised of a group of dedicated individuals interested in volunteering their knowledge and skills to support The Woodlands. The EPB offers emerging professionals exceptional opportunities for personal and professional growth, leadership, networking, and service.

The Woodlands was pleased to welcome several new members to the EPB this year:

- **Emily Lambert**, Senior Product Marketing Manager, BetterUp
- **Meghan Matscherz**, Associate Attorney, Burns White, LLC
- **Fred Gillespie**, Associate Attorney, Fiscus & Ball
- **Tyler Schillero**, Finance Manager, Honeywell



"There are exciting things happening at The Woodlands and the continued growth of the Emerging Professionals Board is one of them! We are thrilled to welcome our newest members and provide them with opportunities to learn the work that goes on within our organization, as well as how their roles can support us."

Laura Thomas, Assistant Director of Special Events & Corporate Relations.



For more information, contact Laura Thomas, lthomas@woodlandsfoundation.org



Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania



The Woodlands was proud to host the 2024 Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania Conference and Competition at The Woodlands campus.

Founded in 1972 by Dr. Philip K. Wood, Ms. Wheelchair PA is not a beauty contest

but rather a competition to select the most articulate, passionate, driven, and motivated individuals who will serve as role models and spokespeople for the disability community in Pennsylvania. These passionate women will have the opportunity to travel throughout the state of Pennsylvania educating Pennsylvanians about the issues that are important to people with disabilities.

“The Woodlands was honored to serve as the host site for the 2025 Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania Conference & Competition. Our barrier-free campus provided the perfect environment for the contestants to

share their advocacy platforms, bond with one another, and enjoy new recreational opportunities,” shared Denise Balkovec, Executive Director at The Woodlands.

The winner of this year’s competition – Ms. Wheelchair 2025 is Kelly Barret. Kelly is a 36-year-old full-time power wheelchair user due to Cerebral Palsy, and is a resident of Erie, PA. As a double alumna of Edinboro University, Kelly recently earned her license as a Social Worker and now works for Voices for Independence in Erie. Outside of work, Kelly enjoys music, traveling, and seeking new adventures. She describes herself as fun-loving, intelligent driven, brave, and an empath.

As Ms. Wheelchair 2025, Kelly will have the opportunity to attend the national competition where she will compete for the title of Ms. Wheelchair America.

“From end-to-end, our 2024 Ms. Wheelchair competition weekend at The Woodlands could not have gone better,”

said Kristin Rebstock, President of the Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania organization. “The Woodlands staff went above and beyond to create an inclusive experience for our contestants. They put people first, and go the extra mile to remove physical barriers, the experience is really unmatched,” Ms. Rebstock continued. “The first question I received from our contestants after the weekend was, ‘When can we go back?!’”

The Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania Organization believes that women are stronger when working together as a larger sisterhood to make the biggest impact for change.



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OUR MISSION

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with disability and chronic illness.

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