

A young boy and a young girl are smiling and enjoying a pool. The boy is in the foreground, wearing a yellow adaptive water ring with a white handle. The girl is next to him, also smiling, wearing a black adaptive water ring with a white handle. In the background, another child is visible wearing a pink life preserver and pink goggles. The water is clear and blue.

# Able

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

THE  
WOODLANDS

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

SPRING 2026



Since 2014, The Woodlands has partnered with British swim School to manage the pool. With over 40 years of experience, British Swim School focuses on water safety and survival through an individualized approach. Programs are available for ages three months through adults, with small class sizes that allow instructors to build strong relationships with students and families.

"The British Swim School's knowledge of the industry, high standards, and inclusive environment have made them the perfect partner for The Woodlands," said Denise Balkovec, Executive Director of The Woodlands.

One of British Swim School's signature offerings, the Aqua Active program, is designed for adults of all ages looking to stay healthy, mobile, and strong through low-impact aquatic exercise. According to Ryan Grindle, owner of the British swim School franchise, "The Woodlands' mission creates a meaningful partnership for us, and the therapeutic pool temperature provides the perfect environment for all of our programs—especially Aqua Active."

For more information about programs or memberships, please contact: Marissa Steyer, [Marissa.steyer@britishswimschool.com](mailto:Marissa.steyer@britishswimschool.com).



# The Woodlands Continues Partnership WITH BRITISH SWIM SCHOOL

Ask any participant what their favorite activity at The Woodlands is and chances are you will hear "swimming in the pool!"

The Woodlands' indoor therapeutic pool was thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and chronic health conditions. Fully funded through the generosity of charitable foundations and private donors, the pool opened in 1995 and has since become an essential part of the programs offered on campus.

Maintained at a therapeutic temperature between 88° and 94°F—with the surrounding air kept slightly warmer—the facility promotes both comfort and healing. Features include two 25-meter lap lanes, a mushroom fountain for adaptive activities, multiple transfer stations with steps into the water, and a hydraulic lift for participants who need assistance entering the pool. An open activity area further supports movement, exercise, and social interaction.



# Music Ensemble

← E X P A N D S →

## Beloved Instructor Kory Antonacci Continues to Lead the Way

If you have visited The Woodlands' campus on a Monday evening, you have likely heard melodic singing and the reverberations of percussion instruments wafting from the Activity Center. An organic extension of the "Notes from the Heart" Summer Music Camps, The Woodlands Music Ensemble is comprised of a vibrant group who gather weekly in the spring and fall to hone their skills in instrumentation, vocal performance, and creative collaboration.



The Music Ensemble was created by longtime Woodlands' instructor Kory Antonacci, who continues to lead the program today. "I have been running Music Ensemble at The Woodlands since the fall of 2012—this fall will be my 15th season!" said Ms. Antonacci, a Board-Certified Music Therapist and Creative and Expressive Arts Therapy (CEAT) Program Manager at UPMC's Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

By 2024, Music Ensemble's popularity had hit a fever pitch, with many individuals being chronically waitlisted for the beloved program. It was evident The Woodlands needed to do more and, with Kory's support, Music Ensemble II launched on Wednesday evenings in the fall of 2025. Both Monday's and Wednesday's classes may have different participants and different repertoires, but at its core the goal is the same—to offer an opportunity for creative expression and community through the joy of musicmaking.

When asked why she continues to remain involved after 15 years, Ms. Antonacci said, "It's so easy to love The Woodlands—the energy, creativity, kindness, and compassion radiate from every corner of the campus the moment

you enter the property. Making music and collaborating with the participants is such an incredible experience to be part of—the growth, decision making, and genuine love for sharing music and joy is something we all have in common and ties us together. Bearing witness to the artistry, storytelling, performance, and sense of community that occur in Music Ensemble is a gift and an honor I do not take lightly. I am so proud to be part of The Woodlands!"

To learn more about Music Ensemble or any of The Woodlands Arts & Music programs, visit <https://mywoodlands.org/programs/music-arts/>





**NEW BOARD CHAIR NAMED**



**MARY D. KOHLER, SPHR, SHRM-SCP** has been named the Chair of The Woodlands Board of Directors. Mary succeeds John P. Stampfel, whose term as Board Chair expired in April of 2026. Mary has embraced her new role with open arms, "As board chair, I see my role as the 'Chief Volunteer' of The Woodlands, leading our talented board of directors and partnering with our extraordinary staff to achieve our mission. It is an honor and privilege to serve this outstanding organization dedicated to enriching the lives of children, teens, and adults with disabilities and chronic illness. As we take the momentous leap to execute on our plans to expand possibilities and reach more people than ever before, I am committed to engaging and challenging everyone to join us in building a promising future for those we serve."

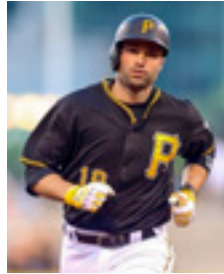
Professionally, Mary is the Head of Human Resources at Gaven Industries. A Board member since 2013, Mary and her husband, John, live in the Wexford area where they raised their two daughters, Krista and Anna.

**WOODLANDS NAMES NEIL WALKER SPIRIT OF GOLF HONOREE**

**NEIL WALKER** will be honored with the Spirit of Golf Award at The Woodlands' 26th Annual Golf Classic to be held on Monday, June 1, 2026 at Butler Country Club.

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.

A Pittsburgh native, Neil Walker enjoyed a 12-year Major League Baseball career after being selected in the first round of the 2004 MLB Draft by the Pittsburgh Pirates. He went on to play for the Pirates, New York Mets, Milwaukee Brewers, New York Yankees, Miami Marlins, and Philadelphia Phillies, earning the 2014 Silver Slugger Award and finishing his career with 149 home runs and 609 runs batted in. Today, Neil continues his connection to the game as a radio and television broadcaster for the Pittsburgh Pirates.



Beyond his professional accomplishments, Neil is deeply committed to giving back to the community that shaped him. He serves as Vice President of the Clint Playball Fund and is actively involved with Pirates Charities, helping expand access to sports, mentorship, and opportunity for young people across Western Pennsylvania. In addition, Neil supports numerous regional nonprofit organizations focused on youth development, health, faith, and community enrichment.

**THE WOODLANDS PARTNERS WITH NF NORTHEAST**

Neurofibromatosis (NF) is a group of genetic disorders of the nervous system that causes tumors to form on the nerves anywhere in or on the body at any time. NF affects more people worldwide than cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy combined.



In 2024, The Woodlands began partnering with the non-profit, NF Northeast, which supports neurofibromatosis patients through advocacy, research, and other valuable resources. Each summer, NF Northeast sponsors individuals to attend summer camps across the east coast that are specifically designed to support their needs. Other partnering camps include members of the seriousfun® network, such as Paul Newman's The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

Unlike most of our peer camps, camper fun does not stop at age 18 at The Woodlands, and NF Northeast has used this rare opportunity to specifically identify adults with NF for a camp experience on our campus. "We value our partnership with The Woodlands! Several adults in our NF community have participated in this unique camp experience. The staff, counselors, and fellow campers create a truly special and welcoming environment, working with each individual to ensure a fun, safe, and memorable experience," said Anne Patterson, Director of Patient and Clinic Outreach for NF Northeast.

The Woodlands looks forward to continuing this meaningful partnership and to welcoming new campers through NF Northeast in the 2026 summer season.

# THE ABILITY EXPERIENCE ONCE AGAIN → VISITS THE WOODLANDS ←



**F**ounded in 1977 by Pi Kappa Phi, The Ability Experience's charge is simple: to create a community of servant leaders who recognize and celebrate the incredible abilities of individuals living with disabilities. One of the ways members serve the community is by participating in an Ability Camp.

Ability Camps are weekend service trips where Pi Kappa Phi members from campuses across the country roll up their sleeves to make camps and facilities more accessible for people with

disabilities. Ability Camps sends people, tools and funding to help complete real projects that matter.

Since 2011, The Woodlands has been chosen numerous times as a site for an Ability Camp. Projects completed at The Woodlands over the years include the construction of a split rail fence and storage shed; the installation of brick walkway; and the rehabilitation of the outdoor camp site/fire pit area. Last year, a team of 32 men from across the nation, all members of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, came to The Woodlands for an Ability Camp. The team worked on a variety of projects to help improve The Woodlands' campus including installing a split rail fence and replacing siding.

"The Ability Camp at The Woodlands gives our guys the chance to step outside their day to day and be part of something bigger than themselves. It's not just about the work we do, but the relationships we build and the perspective we gain from being around such an incredible

community," said Matthew Guerrero, Chapter Services Coordinator, The Ability Experience, a Pi Kappa Phi Philanthropy.

Throughout the building process, the team develops friendships with campers and engages in daily camp activities. While visiting The Woodlands, Ability Camp volunteers had the opportunity to join adult weekend retreat participants for yard games, dancing, and s'mores over the campfire.

The Woodlands' work with The Ability Experience organization continues with an Ability Camp scheduled to visit The Woodlands from April 10-12, 2026.



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