

Camp Attaway, Inc.
Annual Report
December 29, 2004

“Our daughter will benefit from the positive effect of this program for the remainder of her life.” a Camp Attaway parent.

The camper referred to above, “Michelle,” came to Camp Attaway from a single parent family who had just moved to the area from the west coast as consequence of a difficult divorce from Michelle’s father. There was also a history of abuse. Michelle’s developmental history included a premature birth and complicated infancy, followed by a serious car accident that resulted in head injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Early signs of disability included speech and language delay, attentional issues, and strained relationships with peers. Her current school year’s experience was extremely difficult from both a social as well as a learning perspective. Peers excluded and teased her. Her social skill development was so impaired as to alienate her from both peers and teachers. She acted out her emotional difficulties by withdrawal, avoidance of eye contact, and inaudible speech. At Camp Attaway Michelle joined a group of eight children, in which she quickly showed enthusiasm for the activities and connection to the counseling staff. She responded to the positive behavioral support program and the carefully structured activities. She thrived on the one to two ratio of staff to campers. And she utilized the strategies offered and modeled for expressing her needs and feelings in age-appropriate ways. She displayed a new-found confidence in her self and in her abilities in the areas of rock-climbing and group games. An especially moving moment came in the swimming pool where she had been initially tentative and awkward, feelings that she bravely overcame as she struggled and succeeded in passing the swim test which allowed her for the first time ever to enter the deep end of the pool. Her mother, initially and understandably skeptical and protective, soon developed trust in the program and became an active participant in the parent education and support group.

At the post-camp conference, Michelle’s mother expressed the sentiment in the above quote, and Michelle herself, looked us right in the eye and told us that “it was the *bestest* thing I ever did. It was better than going to Chuck E Cheese.”

The following report summarizes the accomplishments of Camp Attaway during the year 2004 budget period. Included are summaries of outcomes and a brief financial statement.

Outcomes Related to Specific Objectives

In this section we will summarize accomplishments of Camp Attaway in reference to each of the objectives for the 2004 season. Objectives will be re-stated here and accompanied by evidence of results.

“Objective 1. 20 children between the ages of 7-13 years, all of whom have been identified as having emotional and/or behavioral disorders, will attend a three-week, therapeutic summer day camp.”

Twenty children, ages 7 to 13 years, attended the camp. All had received qualifying diagnoses either through their school district's procedures or from community therapists. Campers' families resided in Howard and surrounding counties. Referrals to camp came from schools, therapists, social service agencies, pediatricians, camp fairs, local resource directories, and our website.

As in previous years, prospective campers presented with a variety of severe behavioral and emotional problems. Among these problems were aggressive behavior toward peers and adults, defiant resistance to school and other authority figures, withdrawal from social interactions, low self-esteem, pervasive sadness, frequent and intense emotional outbursts, distractibility, and severe anxieties manifested by rigid thinking and controlling behaviors.

Our intake interviews revealed that our campers came to Camp Attaway with the following clinical diagnoses: bi-polar disorder, anxiety disorders, depression, mood disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, oppositional defiant disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, dysthymia, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, pervasive developmental disorder, specific learning disabilities, nocturnal enuresis, and executive functioning disorder.

Ten highly competent and energetic staff members returned from previous seasons, and were joined by four new members and one volunteer who brought high levels of enthusiasm, motivation, and varied experiences to programming for the children.

Staff members represented the following disciplines: special education, elementary education, secondary education, school counseling, hearing and speech sciences, and psychology. Staff were pursuing degrees at all levels from bachelors to doctorate with most staff members enrolled or graduated from the University of Maryland. Staff members' talents were evidenced in a wide variety of camp activities, including crafts, art, drama, games, swimming, water balloons, rock climbing, and sports.

Continuing for the seventh year was our partnership with Earth Treks of Columbia, where campers received three hours of expert rock climbing instruction in a safe and supportive environment. Campers were challenged with tasks involving cooperation and communication in order to achieve success not only for themselves but also for others. Great strides were made in self-esteem and confidence as they set high goals and with help, reached them.

Our almost daily swim at the Jeffers Hill pool continued to be a highlight for campers and staff, thanks to the cooperation of the Columbia Association.

We were pleased by the return for a third year of Artist in Residence, Cathy Vass, who offered twice-a-week art instruction program. Cathy comes to us on leave from the

National Endowment for the Arts. Campers received instruction and guidance in the creation of numerous projects using a variety of media. Projects were structured in such a way as to require a high degree of interaction among campers and staff.

In its ninth year, Camp Attaway continued to emphasize giving campers many opportunities to work on their ability to assess their own behavior, make better choices, and to start and sustain friendships all in the context of the varied activities listed above. Positive behavioral supports systems facilitated campers gaining recognition of their behavioral goals and their daily progress toward those goals as measured by accumulation of positive reinforcers.

“Objective 2. Parents of 20 campers will actively participate in the following ways:

- Pre-camp intake interview and assessment
- Parent Night Meeting with Staff
- Parent-Counselor Mid-point Evaluation Conference
- Parent Education and Support Group (weekly)
- Family Potluck Dinner with Staff
- Post-camp feedback and evaluation conference
- Completion of assessment and evaluation forms”

All parent-related objectives were met. Pre-camp intake conferences and/or home visits were held with each of the thirteen new families. The format of the intake parent conference or home visit included gathering current information about the camper’s needs both in school, home and community settings. Additionally, a developmental and social history as well as reinforcement inventory were taken. Finally, parents identified goals that they would like to see addressed in the camp program. School and other therapists’ reports were shared at that time.

Our registration night was held two days before Camp opened. At that time, we received from parents all necessary permissions (e.g., for photography, fields trips, medications, release of information), as well as parent-completed standardized behavioral assessment forms (i.e., the Behavioral Assessment System for Children), and tuition payments according to agreed upon scales based on families’ ability to pay. We concluded the evening with sharing by parents of their concerns and goals for themselves and their children.

Our two family events were very well attended. The Parent Night and Evaluation Conference provided an opportunity for parents and staff to share and exchange ideas about management of difficult behavior. On the day of our Family Pot Luck Dinner, campers helped with the preparation and cooking, and parents, siblings, friends, and grandparents enjoyed the opportunity to meet with one another and with camp staff in an informal setting.

We continued our partnership with Larry Smith, LCSW, who provided classes in parenting education and parent support exclusively for our Camp Attaway families. The parent training program consisted of weekly meetings, two hours in length.

Meetings were a mixture of didactic presentation, skill modeling, sharing of information by parents, role play, and question/ answer.

An average of 12 out of 25 families were represented each week. In the final evaluations of the parent group, parents strongly agreed that the meetings provided new and useful information. Examples of parents' comments include:

Enjoyed sharing of stories. Liked learning different strategies. Never long enough!!

Told my son that I didn't have time for a blow out. Would schedule a time later. Totally made him cock his head. WORKED!

Larry does a great job of educating us and he also lets us speak which is an excellent therapy for me and probably all of us.

[I Learned] to be more patient and less excitable. Overall I thought the sessions were wonderful.

It gives us more hope that there is more than just one method for handling the situations that we all face on a regular basis.

We learned by listening to others in our situation and having Larry add his slant helped dramatically.

At the close of the camp season, twenty of the twenty-five families took advantage of the opportunity to attend our postcamp feedback conferences. Staff reports were reviewed, and parents assessed children's progress during camp in relation to goals. Recommendations were provided for each family with regard to child management strategies both in the home and in school. Consultation and recommendations have been shared with community therapists as well as to schools.

"Objective 3. Campers will most importantly, have fun, and also will demonstrate improved social/behavioral skills in the areas of compliance, tasks, peer interactions, and management of feelings, as indicated by:

Standardized assessment instruments
Clinical staff notes
Therapists' summary reports
Parent reports
Self reports
School follow up
Community therapists' reports."

Camp was successful in providing activities and behavioral support so that children with histories of failure, low self-esteem, inappropriate expression of feelings, aggression, poor coping skills, anxiety, depression, inattentiveness, social isolation, emotional lability, and defiance were able to: (a) have fun, (b) demonstrate behavioral

self-control, (c) make new friends, (d) express feelings appropriately, (e) cope with frustration, (f) conform to structure, (g) sustain attention to activities, (h) take pride in accomplishments, (i) handle increased independence, (j) show leadership, (k) participate in new and sometimes very challenging activities, (l) respond to constructive feedback from staff and peers, (m) initiate interpersonal coping strategies, (n) self-reflect on behavior and how it affects others, (o) use appropriate outlets for expression of feelings (e.g., art, writing, physical activity), (p) use the Camp staff for problem-solving challenging or upsetting family situations, (q) make successful transitions between home and Camp, and (r) recognize and value the positive feelings associated with Camp.

We continued to see emphasis on campers' reflection, discussion and processing of their behavior within each group as well as individually with staff. The objective was to teach campers new skills in examining their own behaviors and their effect on peer relations, group development and accomplishment of fun. This was achieved in 2004 in part by pre-camp staff training as well as the expertise and previous Camp Attaway experience that the staff brought with them.

Staff members maintained daily observation notes for each camper, and used these daily notes to prepare summary reports at the end of camp. School and community therapists' follow-up consultation was made available for all campers, and is currently in process for ten campers. To illustrate the type of presenting problems and progress recorded for campers, we have attached two summary reports completed by staff on which we based our summary findings and recommendations to campers, parents, schools, and community therapists.

The evaluation process is a vital part of assuring that campers make progress and that the program can continue to grow. Feedback is received from campers, their parents, and staff. We collect formal evaluation statements from parents, and meet individually with campers and parents to hear all about their Camp Attaway experiences. All these evaluation activities point out the parts of the program that are effective as well as highlighting components which need improvement. Overall, the evaluation results tell us that we continue to be on the right track. Examples of parents' comments include the following:

"This program is incredible, the counselors are outstanding, Dr. L. and Dr. C have done an excellent job in every way."

"The group who runs this program truly understands the challenges of the campers and their parents and are equipped with extremely useful techniques to encourage improvement and coping."

"I believe my son highly benefits from this program every year and I see major improvement each year."

"The leaders were caring, kind, creative, and dependable. They all did an excellent job."

"The staff were all enthusiastic and very committed. They really took an interest in my child and all the others."

"Two kids to one counselor--perfect."

"Wow--lots of counselors who are skilled and knowledgeable!"

"My son learns every year, has a good support system and I know he's safe in a nurturing environment where you focus on the positive."

"The quality of content in this program is unmatched by any other."

"There was wide variety of activities--crafts, games, rock-climbing, swimming--the kids always had lots to do."

"[Our son] was out, engaged and with peers--he learned more self-control."

"Please continue to support Camp Attaway. It is a Godsend for kids who are different."

"This camp is perfect for the kids who come. It fills a great need in our community."

"The program is costly but understandably so given all that is given to the campers and families. Worth the cost."

"We reference skills and strategies learned at Camp Attaway all year long. Can't wait to come back next year!"

"This program has proved instrumental in dealing with our son's needs throughout the year both at home and at school."

"For parents: peace of mind in knowing he's having fun."

"A program like this is worth as much as one can possibly afford."

"[Our daughter] will benefit from the positive effect of this program for the remainder of her life."

Objective 4. "Five (5) campers, ages 14-16, with previous Camp Attaway experience will be selected to participate in a CIT program. Under supervision and mentoring from camp staff, the CITs will assist in all aspects of program activities, modeling goal-setting and self-determination for younger campers, and developing good work habits in preparation for future employment."

The Camp Attaway Counselors In Training (CIT) Program completed its fourth year in 2004. Five of the oldest campers from previous years formed our CIT group and were assigned various responsibilities within a structured program to learn the basic concepts of camp counseling. The CITs developed an effective group identity while assisting with the daily and weekly responsibilities of camp counseling children with emotional and behavioral disorders. Overall, the CIT Program met with great success as the CITs learned various social skills, modeled appropriate behavior, practiced leadership skills, established personal goals.

The CITs began each week writing a personal goal. They were required to delineate three steps that would be taken in order to achieve their specific goal. They discussed their goals and the appropriate means of achieving them with their peers, as well as their counselors. Each CIT put forth a lot of thought into devising their personal goal, as they carefully thought out their desired improvements. They were constantly reminded of their goals throughout the day. Reflection and evaluation of their personal goals occurred every Friday, which allowed them a chance to discuss their achievements and room for growth. Some examples of personal goals included:

- helping campers with activities
- staying positive
- creating a multi-camper model (triangle)
- avoiding arguments
- helping counselors
- encouraging campers to participate in activities and form friendships

What Worked?

- Affirmation process (popsicle stick) (New for 2004)
 - ~Allowed CITs to complement each other and gain positive praise from peers.
 - ~Required them to reflect on the day's activities and their actions in particular situations.
- CIT Time
 - ~Provided time for peer discussion of topics directly related to adolescence.
 - ~Provided the framework for group unity
 - ~Allows CITs to take a break from stressful camp situations.
 - ~Provided an environment for CITs to be themselves.
- Role Playing (New for 2004)
 - ~CITs were presented with real life situations and were required to provide a rationale for how they would handle the situations.
 - ~Allowed CITs to draw on personal experiences related to the real life situations that were presented.
 - ~Often resulted in discussions that led to a positive outlet for concerns and expressions of feelings.
- Question Box (New for 2004)
 - ~Provided the CITs with a chance to ask personal questions to the group or to specified individuals.
 - ~Relieved the pressure of bringing an uncomfortable issue up in front of the group or face-to-face with a counselor
 - ~ Many CIT's found the question box to be useful in communicating concerns.
- Weekly Goals
 - ~ Gave the CITs something to focus on for the week and strive for.
 - ~ Resulted in great conversations among the CITs in creating their goals and reflecting on them. They gave one another positive feedback, but also appropriate corrective criticism.
- Writing
 - ~ We really pushed the CITs to express their feelings and although we wanted them to communicate orally, we also recognize that is not always the most comfortable means of communication for them; so, we allowed them to write or type on the computer.

They made great use of this strategy, and often were eager to discuss their issues after writing things down.

- Five-Step Plan for Managing Frustration/ Heightened Emotion—to be used in any situation, with the ultimate goal of gathering one’s emotions and positively returning to the situation--(new 2004)
 1. Ignore the person who is bothering you
 2. Kindly tell them that they are bothering you and ask them to stop
 3. Tell an adult that you are being bothered by a particular individual and ask if they can intervene
 4. Remove yourself from the situation while staying in the room and going to talk to someone else
 5. Leave the room and find an appropriate place to take a mental break and calm yourself down
- Emphasis on “the social triangle”
 1. Interacting with one camper
 2. Finding another camper
 3. Fostering a relationship between the two campers so they can interact with each other independently.

What Needs Improvement/ Suggestions for the Future...

- Individual Points
 - ~ The individual point system was rather ineffective. Their behavior was good enough that they did not need to be kept on a point system.
- Planned Activities
 - ~ The CITs spent a good chunk of time creating and planning an activity that they would be responsible for conducting with one of the younger groups or for the entire camp. Much preparation and thought went into their activities and due to scheduling among the rest of the camp, they were never able to do their activities.
- Career Exploration (New 2004)
 - ~ We asked that the CITs explore a future career to present to the group, however, that activity got dropped because of lack of time. We would like to see this happen in the future because of the value in such an activity for the boys.
- More Computer Related or Computer Based Activities
- Assign more roles and responsibilities during swim time (swim buddies, encourager, diving board manager, time keeper, game regulator)
- Give the CITs more structured opportunities to give their counselors, and other camp counselors feedback.
- Give the CITs more preparation time in leading and explaining activities prior to expecting them to do so on their own.

Outstanding Program Aspects

Three children who received services through the Howard County Department of Social Services (DSS, Family Preservation Program) attended Camp Attaway in 2004. There were two aspects of this **partnership** that we consider to be significant accomplishments. First, the high level of cooperation in the dissemination of information between our two agencies allowed us to provide for a smooth transition into the Camp Attaway program for the children and their families. These are families whose history would have suggested difficulty in following through and taking full

advantage of the resources provided. However, in this case, the high level of ongoing contact and sharing of information facilitated full participation by the children and their parents. Second, the full cost of attending Camp Attaway was subsidized by DSS, which freed the parents of the pressure of paying for this services.

A second accomplishment in 2004 was the success of the Parent Education and Support Group. This service has been provided to Camp Attaway parents for five years, and has been very positively evaluated by the parents. The difference this year is that the parent group has decided that the benefits of membership and meeting were so significant that **they have elected to continue as a group** through the school year. In this way, the progress made by children and parents during the three-week Camp Attaway session will have greater likelihood of continuing and generalizing into the school and community environments. The Parent Group also serves a network for sharing of resources among the parents, and as an advocacy group for children who have emotional and behavioral disorders.

A third accomplishment in 2004 was the successful initiation of our **Volunteer Program**. Beginning with our first staff volunteer, a psychology major from Lynchburg College, we showed that the Camp Attaway program can serve as a springboard to eventual membership on the professional staff as well as a practical experience complementing the student's studies in the college classroom. We look forward to expanding this aspect of our program and in this way promoting this kind of work as a career opportunity for young adults who wish to pursue work with children.

And then some. Camp Attaway's services to children and families do not end on the last day of Camp, rather we view our program as providing year-round support and direct services to children's and families' mental health and education on an as-needed basis. For example, we have:

- initiated contact with mental health service providers for exchange of treatment information
- attended school special education committee meetings for individualized education plan (IEP) development and assessment
- provided consultation to teachers and counselors in schools attended by Campers
- made referrals to appropriate therapists
- made presentations to community organizations to raise awareness of children's year-round mental health needs.

Staff. We were pleased to have a number of staff members returning from previous years. These counselors formed the foundation of the 2004 staff, which by all accounts turned into one of the most cohesive and effective groups to date. Coming from a wide array of backgrounds and academic disciplines, counselors quickly grew into a highly communicative staff, who enjoyed the work, built bonds of collegiality, and met the daily challenges of Camp Attaway with good humor and professionalism.

Campers benefitted from the pervasive and positive approach of staff to the management of emotions and behaviors throughout the camp day. Consequently campers received constructive feedback about their behaviors and feelings in supportive and educational ways. An additional form of effective feedback in 2004 was the continued use of the Stars Activity, during which campers publicly recognized each other for specific behaviors and accomplishments.

Staff members were surveyed by the Program Director to obtain their ratings and comments regarding the work environment, training and programming. The staff reflected on the organization of the program, and the level of support for both campers and staff. As in past years, one of the noted strengths of the staff and leadership was the level of teamwork and cooperation. This year's staff brought a wealth of different experiences and expertise to Camp Attaway, from special education, to counseling to speech pathology. A number of staff commented on their time at Camp as a learning experience, both from the children and from each other. The types of interactions between directors and staff were viewed as positive and interdependent. Following are quotes from the staff feedback evaluation forms:

"very professional and supportive!"
"always have good ideas on ways to help the kids"
"staff support could not be any better!"
"very smooth days"
"There are always obstacles we cannot predict but things are always well thought-out"

Parents. Once again, parents' initial and sustained commitment resulted in near perfect camper attendance, as well as follow-through on completion of numerous camp forms, payment of tuition, preparation of campers each day with swimsuit and lunch, and cooperation with all camp policies.

Affordability. Due to the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals, our scholarship program was once again able to keep costs down to a reasonable level for all parents. The average scholarship for the 11 campers and CITs who received any support was \$1,159.

Diversity. Our efforts to serve a diverse population have continued to be successful, in that we have consistently over nine years served 25% minority children and families. Our staff includes members of minority groups (25%) and this year we added a person with a disability. We anticipate these efforts and results to continue as we are strongly committed to serving the increasingly diverse population.

Interagency collaboration. We continued to enjoy a unique partnership with Howard County Recreation and Parks' Division of Therapeutic Recreation under the direction of Cathy Vigus. This agency, in recognition of Camp Attaway's ability to provide a needed service, contributed six staff positions, registration, personnel and payroll services, publicity, licensing, and CPR/First Aid training. Also, we were pleased with our new relationship with Jeffers Hill Elementary School, under the leadership of Principal Pam Butler, whose staff and facilities were most welcoming.

Art instruction program. Professional artist and art instructor, Cathy Vass offered six sessions of art instruction with projects that challenged the campers to be more expressive through various media. Cathy's projects encouraged a high degree of interaction among campers in an atmosphere of fun and creativity.

The Future of Camp Attaway

We look forward to our tenth season of Camp Attaway. We propose the following objectives for 2005:

1. 20 children between the ages of 7-13 years, all of whom have been identified as having emotional and/or behavioral disorders, will attend a three-week, therapeutic summer day camp.
2. Parents of 20 campers will actively participate in the following ways:
 - Pre-camp intake interview and assessment
 - Parent Night Meeting with Staff
 - Parent-Counselor Mid-point Evaluation Conference
 - Parent Education and Support Group (weekly)
 - Family Potluck Dinner with Staff
 - Post-camp feedback and evaluation conference
 - Completion of assessment and evaluation forms
3. Campers will most importantly, have fun. They also will demonstrate improved skills in the areas of compliance, tasks, peer interactions, management of feelings, and self-reflection as indicated by:
 - Standardized assessment instruments
 - Clinical staff notes
 - Therapists' summary reports
 - Parent reports
 - Self reports
 - School follow up
 - Community therapists' reports
4. Campers, ages 14-16, with previous Camp Attaway experience, and who meet all eligibility criteria, will be selected to participate in a Counselor-in-Training (CIT) program. Under supervision and mentoring from camp staff, the CITs will assist in all aspects of program activities, model goal-setting and self-determination for younger campers, and develop good work habits in preparation for future employment. In 2005, we propose to add community-based work apprenticeships in regular camps in Howard County. The CIT Program of Camp Attaway will allow older children with disabilities to explore community service and internship experiences in his or her area of interest. With 'coaching' from counselors, the CITs will have the opportunity to take responsibility and experience success in their new role.

Long-range Objectives. We envision Camp Attaway being held in a more camp-like setting, perhaps a rural Howard County location, with woods, a lake, and a number of buildings and open spaces. Included in our long-range objectives are a camp program that serves 30 to 40 children in two three-week sessions. Overnight programming is also part of our long-range plan. Finally, we plan to operate a transportation system (vans) to assist families in accessing our camp in its rural location.

Funding. We have received funding and in-kind support from: 1) Departments of Social Services; 2) in-kind funding from the University of Maryland Department of Special Education; and 3) continuing collaborative funding from the Howard County Parks and Recreation Department.

Camp Attaway, Inc. has raised revenue through a variety of efforts. Private donations have been received in response to the Friends of Attaway Campaign, a direct mail solicitation. The members of the Board of Directors have each made financial as well as in-kind contributions to the corporation.

Major gift and grant support in FY04 was received from
The Albright Foundation
The Columbia Foundation
The Rotary Club of Columbia
The Stone Family Foundation
Ruppert Landscaping Company
Dart Group/Crown Books Foundation.

Parent tuition payments for 2004 covered approximately 40% of Camp operating expenses, Department of Social Services paid 8%, and the balance was provided by Camp Attaway's Scholarship fund. Thus, external support continues to be necessary in order to meet our costs and to provide services to families regardless of their ability to pay.

Interagency collaboration. Camp Attaway has a strong commitment to and record of interagency collaboration. Our primary partner is the Howard County Recreation and Parks (HCRP) department, which contracts with Camp Attaway, Inc. to operate the Camp as one component in their array of community recreation programs for persons with disabilities. HCRP provides 6 staff positions, registration, publicity, personnel services, administrative support services, materials, evaluation, and licensing.

Finally, the University of Maryland, Department of Special Education provides clerical support, and in-kind contribution of a portion of Dr. Cooper's time. Camp Attaway provided Special Education teacher candidates with a supervised professional development experience.

Financial Statement

Funds were requested to support tuition assistance so that children can attend based on their need rather than their family's ability to pay. A total of \$12,750 was provided to families in the form of tuition scholarships. Parents paid a total of \$26,100.

A full financial statement is available on request.

The FY04 Annual Report was approved by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors at the December 9, 2004 meeting.