

# CAMP ATTAWAY NEWS



DECEMBER 1, 2009



*“Great job Camp Attaway! Enough cannot be said about the program. All of the staff at Camp Attaway have given our children a satisfying and positive experience which allows them to feel and experience success.”*

*A Camp Attaway Parent*

**T**wenty-two campers with emotional and/or behavioral disorders attended the fourteenth season of Camp Attaway. All had received qualifying diagnoses either through their school district’s procedures or from community therapists. Campers represented six counties and Baltimore City with the largest contingent residing in Howard County. The campers came with a variety of difficulties ranging from poor peer and family relations, disorders of attention, com-

pliance, anxiety, and problems with expressing feelings and coping appropriately. Fourteen campers were attending for anywhere from their second to their fifth year. Ages ranged from 7 to 13 including boys and girls.

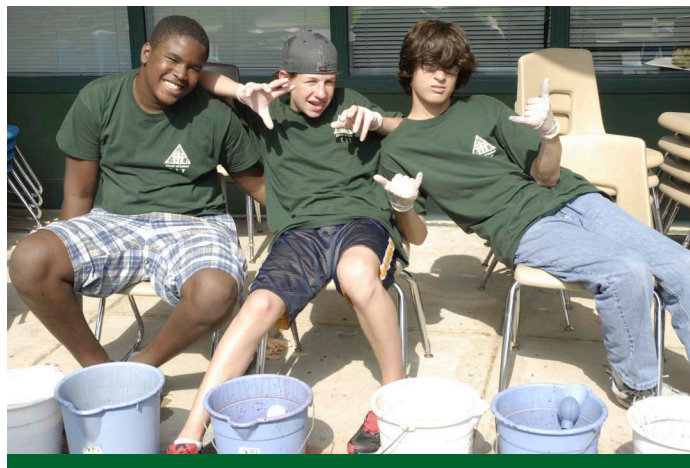
*“Camp Attaway continues to be affirming, positive and powerful for our son. I see him grow every summer.”*

The program was held for a second consecutive year at Bryant Woods Elementary School in Columbia. Activities included sports, drama, music, games, art, nature, rock climbing, group building, and swimming at the Bryant Woods pool.

*“Activities are fun, creative, closely monitored and directed by staff. The modifications in the programs from last year provided some newness and excitement.”*

*“Loved the nature program! Art continues to be a favorite.”*

Each activity was preceded by staff members introducing the behavioral expectations and followed by feedback and self-assessment by campers of their performance and participation.



Emphasis was placed on setting of goals and self-monitoring of behaviors by campers. Positive behavioral supports were used. Daily behavioral accomplishments were recognized and rewarded through such incentives as Camper of the Day, special group activities, and lots of high fives and thumbs up.

Continuing this year was an additional form of effective feedback during which campers publicly and positively recognized each other for specific behaviors and accomplishments.

*“I appreciate the efforts to get kids to talk, identify feelings and issues. In fact, I think my son will ultimately be particularly good at this because of this work.”*

The Counselor-In-Training Program (CIT) continued for its ninth year. This summer four adolescent males assumed various responsibilities within the structured program to pre-

pare them for basic camp counseling and the workforce. The CITs worked on: improving self-esteem and confidence; practicing professional courtesy and collaboration; developing and practicing leadership skills; and, effectively establishing personal goals for themselves.

## STAFF

Ten highly competent and energetic staff members returned from previous seasons, and were joined by seven new members 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, clinical social work, counseling, and clinical psychology. Staff members were pursuing degrees at the bachelors and masters levels.

The very high ratio of staff to campers allowed for assurance of safety, individualized supervision and behavioral management, and ongoing feedback to children in regard to their behaviors. Staff members met to discuss individual campers' behavioral support plans and maintained daily observation notes for each camper. These daily notes were used to prepare summary reports at the end of camp for sharing with parents, schools, and community therapists.

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Dana Rothermel, a seven-year veteran of Camp Attaway, completed her second season as program director, as well as her second year as a certified special education resource teacher in Howard County. Dana continued to bring enthusiasm as well as a wealth of knowledge and expertise to staff training and worked closely with staff in a supervisory role. Dana was joined again this year by Assistant Program Director Shannon Speake, a special education crisis intervention specialist in Howard County with six years experience at Camp Attaway. Her work this summer focused on daily program operations.



## EXCITING ADDITIONS

From the previous year's evaluation, campers and parents gave feedback regarding the need to 'freshen up' our programming menu. With our continuing themes each camp season of helping campers connect with the world they live in, this season we incorporated a nature component. Led by a counselor who has her degree in environmental science/education, activities were developed and implemented to promote responsibility in following through on tasks (planted seeds and took ownership of nurturing throughout the camp season), promote trust, group cooperation and problem solving in a number of nature-related activities . A second accomplishment was the production of our first camper-run newsletter (two editions). The newsletters included CITs interviewing campers about aspects of their respective experiences, camper-generated brain teasers and games and a

brief calendar of upcoming activities. The newsletter also included photographs of the campers taken by the CITs. A third accomplishment arose out of parents' requests for more daily feedback about their children and the activities. With the adage, every picture tells a story, at the end of each camp day, we utilized a digital photo frame for parents to see pictures of their children's participation. Additionally, staff accompanied campers to their respective parents and talked briefly about the camper's highlights (and/or challenges) of the day.

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Continuing for the twelfth year was our partnership with Earth Treks of Columbia, where campers received 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.

We continued to enjoy a unique partnership with Howard County Recreation and Parks. This agency, in recognition of Camp Attaway's ability to provide a needed service in the community, contributed administrative support,



registration, personnel services, payroll, CPR and First Aid training, and salaries for staff positions. We are especially appreciative of the continued collaboration with our partners in HCRP's Therapeutic Recreation division, Susan Potts and Amy Patton under the leadership of Phil Bryant.

Our almost daily swim at the Bryant Woods Pool continued to be a highlight for campers and staff, thanks to the cooperation of the Columbia Association, especially Jean Marlow. We also want to thank and express our appreciation to Bryant Woods Elementary School, under the leadership of Principal Sean Martin, whose staff and facilities were most welcoming.

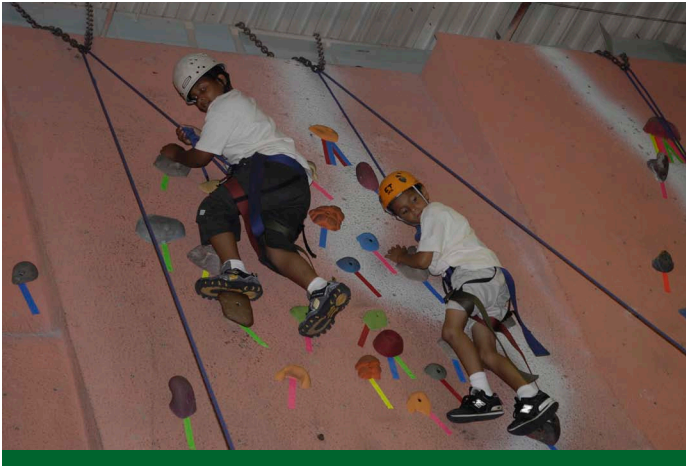
We were pleased by the return for an eighth year of Artist-in-Residence, Cathy Vass, who offered the twice-a-week art instruction program. Cathy comes to us on leave from the National Endowment for the Arts. She brought her unique blend of personality, knowledge of art, and skills and sensitivity to the campers in order to provide an outstanding and creative art experience. Campers received instruction and guidance in the creation of numerous projects using a variety of media, including paper mache masks and the ever popular fish prints. Projects were structured in such a way as to require a high degree of interaction among campers and staff.



## PARENTS

From start to finish, parents were actively involved in the program. They were responsible for excellent campers' attendance (average daily attendance=99%) and punctuality, and preparation each day for swimming. We also appreciated their enthusiastic participation in the Parent Night meeting and Family Dinner. All parents fulfilled their financial agreements.

We continued our partnership with Larry Smith, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, who provided four classes in parenting education and parent support exclusively for our Camp Attaway families. On average 18 families attended each session. The objectives of the parent group sessions included: preventative strategies for keeping problems "small or not at all"; various motivations that underlie oppositional behavior and learning strategies for managing oppositional behavior; learning about the complexity of factors that influence oppositional and other emotional



and behavioral disorders; learn skills of managing ADHD behavior on a daily basis; learning to identify the factors that escalate behavior into an explosion, along with skills for reducing explosive outbursts; and, the impact of technology on children. Feedback from parents indicates that as a result of Larry's sessions with the parents, the progress made by children and parents during the three-week Camp Attaway session has a greater likelihood of continuing and generalizing into the school and community environments. In the final evaluations of the parent group, parents agreed that the meetings provided new and useful information. Examples of parents' comments include:

*“Larry Smith always provides insightful, smart, useful knowledge – looking at what’s underneath anger, how to view electronic time, questions/responses for interacting with children who voice negative things about self, how*

*to view homework...”*

*“We learned how to not waste emotional energy but to learn the positive behavior that helps both the child and parent grow.”*

*“I’ve tried saying “no” just twice and then stopped the conversation on the topic. It effectively short-circuited the argument.”*

*“I have limited TV and have thoroughly enjoyed using the “one-liners” given out at our last meeting. Works wonders!”*

*“These meetings are so very necessary for the newcomers and it is also a validating process for the returning parents.”*

## HOW DID WE DO?

Feedback was received from campers and their parents. We collected formal evaluation statements from parents, and met individually with campers and parents to hear all about their Camp Attaway experiences. Overall, the evaluation results were very positive. Some examples:

*“I think it’s hard to find a great place for these kids and if the expense is what it takes to deliver such a camp,*

*it's not an unreasonable expense  
for what we get from the camp."*

*"I found the home visit prior to the  
beginning of camp extremely helpful  
to both the parent and camper."*

*"He has made a new friend on the  
second day of camp and they enjoy  
each other. It is a wonderful thing to  
see after so many bad past attempts."*

*"She seems to have blossomed – at drop  
off, I saw her initiating lots of greetings  
and introducing me to her new friends."*

*"He has learned to make verbal requests  
for anything he wants instead of  
pouting, whining and crying as well as  
express verbally his anger and not  
to blow up instantly."*

*"It is such a relief knowing my  
daughter is in good hands... with  
people who will be able to handle  
even her difficult moments."*

*"I have never seen my son so happy and  
pleased with himself as he is today!  
Thank you!"*

## **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 \$1,568, bringing our fourteen-year total of \$180,000 in scholarships awarded.

Major gift and grant support in FY09 was received from:

- The Joseph E. & Marjorie B. Jones Foundation
- Susquehanna Bank
- Dart Group II Foundation
- The Rotary Club of Columbia
- The Columbia Foundation
- The Holly and George Stone Family Foundation

In July 2005, the Columbia Foundation notified us that our competitive application for a Columbia Foundation Endowment was approved. Under the terms of this award, the Dart II Foundation made three annual gifts of \$5,000, which was matched by the Columbia Foundation, and placed in an Endowment Fund.

**Individual donors wishing to make a contribution to this Endowment may do so by directing their funds to the Columbia Foundation ([www.columbiafoundation.org](http://www.columbiafoundation.org)) and specifying Camp Attaway as the beneficiary.**

## **THE FUTURE OF CAMP ATTAWAY**

Continuing to be included in our long-range objectives is a camp program that serves 30 to 40 children in two three-week sessions. 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.

Parent tuition payments for 2009 covered approximately 32% of Camp operating expenses, and the balance was provided by Camp Attaway's Scholarship fund. Thus, external support is necessary in order to meet our costs and to provide services to families regardless of their ability to pay.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Last year our Friends of Attaway Campaign raised over \$10,000 in individual contributions. This year we are aiming to raise \$15,000 with your support.

Should you be in a position to make a financial contribution, a form and enve-

lope are also enclosed. We encourage you to keep spreading the word about Camp Attaway and helping us to find ways to meet our long-term goals.

This year was one of major change and challenge for Camp Attaway. Co-founder and co-director Dr. David Cooper has followed a new career path as Dean of the College of Education at Elon University. Thus, for Camp Attaway, making the successful transition and adjustment included hiring Brent Stewart, as a part-time office manager for a second year, who stepped in and carried out many of Dr. Cooper's responsibilities. Dr. Cooper, on behalf of the Camp Attaway family, we thank you.

Thanks to all of you for your kindness and support through these fourteen years. Special thanks to individuals who have made steady contributions including our Board of Directors and our good friends at the accounting firm Miller & Associates whose work has kept us on good terms with the IRS.

To our families, and to you we say:

Happy Holidays and ATTAWAY!

Saul N. Lieberman, Ph.D.  
Clinical Director

## 2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Bob Cantor
- Cheryl Duvall
- Felecia McLarin
- Herb Moltzan
- Cindy Sandler
- Catherine Savich
- Ken Williams

2010 Registration opens mid-February.

Call Dr. Lieberman 410-730-2633.

Camp Dates: June 25 - July 16, 2010.

Thanks to Chris Doyle and Mat Guenther for managing our website: [www.campattaway.org](http://www.campattaway.org).

*“Camp Attaway is the best thing that has happened to me and my son. He prepares, fixes his own lunch and looks forward to the next day. He has mentioned becoming a CIT – wow!”*

