

Camp Attaway News



We were blown away by Camp Attaway! From the top down, the program is Aces. We love how kind and nurturing the staff is, the fun activities, and how excited our son was to go every day. See you next year!

- A Camp Attaway Parent

Each year I see him grow and blossom in working with other campers, friends, family, and teachers once we are home.

-A Camp Attaway Parent

My son has made progress in all areas. Armed with ideas from camp and parent support groups, we are in a stronger position to continue on a path to improvement. See you next summer!

- A Camp Attaway Parent

CAMP ATTAWAY CELEBRATES ITS 16TH YEAR!

This summer, twenty-four campers and six CITs with emotional and behavioral disabilities attended the sixteenth season of Camp Attaway. All had received qualifying diagnoses either through their school district's procedures or from community therapists. Campers represented seven counties 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, compliance, anxiety, and problems with expressing feelings and coping appropriately. Fifteen campers returned, attending from their second to their seventh year. Ages ranged from 7 to 16, including boys and girls.



THE ATTAWAY PROGRAM

This year, the program was held at Jeffers Hill Elementary School in Columbia. Activities included sports, drama, music, games, art, nature, rock climbing, group building, and swimming.

In the Attaway tradition, 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.



COUNSELOR-IN-TRAINING (CIT) PROGRAM

The **Counselor-In-Training Program (CIT)** continued for its eleventh year. This summer six adolescent boys and girls assumed various responsibilities within the structured program to prepare them for basic camp counseling and the workforce. Additionally, the two returning CITs spent the one week working at a the **Days End Horse Farm Rescue**. The CITs gained skills in improving self-esteem and confidence, practicing professional courtesy and collaboration, developing and practicing leadership skills, and effectively establishing personal goals for themselves.



STAFF

“An amazing group of professionals who give 100% each day of camp. It is such a plus that so many staff return year after year.”

“I use many of the skills learned from meetings with staff to enjoy a better relationship with my son.”

Nine highly competent and energetic staff members returned from previous seasons, and were joined by eight new members who brought high levels of enthusiasm, motivation, and varied experiences to programming for our campers. Staff members represented the following disciplines: special education, elementary and secondary education, clinical social work, school counseling, human development, and psychology. Staff members had varying levels of education ranging from those pursuing bachelors degrees to those who have already completed their masters.

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.



ATTAWAY LEADERSHIP

Dana Rothermel, a nine-year veteran of Camp Attaway, completed her fourth season as program director, as well as her fourth 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 this year by Assistant Program Director Julia Lieberman, with four years of experience at Camp Attaway. Her work this summer focused on both daily program operations and the nature program.

NATURE PROGRAM

Through a generous grant from the **Kate Svitek Memorial Family Foundation**, our nature program grew by leaps and bounds. Julia Lieberman led a number of nature related activities designed to promote responsibility in following



through on tasks, trust, group cooperation, and problem solving. Activities included: 1) an amazing reptile presentation by **Reptile Wonders**; 2) planting vegetable and flower seeds; 3) a composting presentation by the University of Maryland to the CITs; 4) a trip to **Terrapin Adventures** where campers experienced a ropes course and learned about the principles of “Leave No Trace”; and 5) a trip to a community pond where campers performed tests to determine its health. Campers experienced nature in numerous new ways. Many never participated in nature activities like the ones at camp. By giving campers the opportunity to view nature in a new light, we helped them build a stronger relationship with the environment around them.

“Please keep doing Nature activities !”

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Continuing for the fourteenth 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.

Our almost daily swim at the Cradlerock and Jeffers Hill Pools 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 Jeffers Hill Elementary School, under the leadership of Principal Patricia Schifflett, whose staff and facilities were most welcoming. We were fortunate again this year to have the services of a gifted artist in residence. **Cathy Vass** brought her unique blend of personality, knowledge of art, and skills and sensitivity to children in order to provide an outstanding and creative art experience during Camp. Cathy has worked closely with the Program Directors and staff to enhance the art curriculum to expand the activities to assure that returning campers were able to explore new ways of artistic expression. The pride with which the children viewed their work and the process by which they worked together provided excellent opportunities for children to experience success, feeling of accomplishment, and connection to peers and adults.



PARENTS AND FAMILIES

From start to finish, parents were actively involved in the program. They were responsible for excellent campers' attendance (average daily attendance of 98%) 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. Topics in the parent group sessions included: contouring verbal input to make it more effective; interrupting dysfunctional patterns of behavior; handling entitlement-based demands; empathy versus reassurance; preventing kids from developing unrealistic expectations; tools for helping children with impaired sense of time; parents keeping sufficient distance to not get hooked by disingenuous behavior; responding to victim statements and staying off the Rescue Triangle; parents managing their motivation so as not to over function for their children; facilitate children's problem solving versus doing it for them; and nurturing emotional safety.

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.

"Larry Smith is incredibly insightful and able to distill information/ideas into 'street language'. [I] really enjoyed his talks. We really appreciated his time."

"The parent group exceeded my expectations. I got good suggestions and a better understanding of how to decrease the bad behavior and replace it with positive behaviors. Developed a higher sense of confidence in my abilities to effectively help my child with his anxiety and anger."

"Subject matter was on point, discussions were thought provoking, intriguing and helpful."

HOW DID WE DO?

Twenty-nine of the thirty parents completed and turned in program evaluations. Overall, the evaluation results were very positive. Families ranked nearly all categories either "Excellent" or "Good," with particular strengths being camper-staff ratio, staff interactions with campers, the Family Picnic, parent support group and camper growth. Some examples of their comments:

My son has made progress in all areas. Armed with ideas from camp and parent support groups, we are in a stronger position to continue on a path to improvement. See you next summer!

I did see him use a breathing technique to calm himself down when he did not get a toy at Walmart - I was able to walk him out of the store without a tantrum.

She had her first sleepover with three other female campers!

He just doesn't feel as depressed anymore. He wants to spend more time talking as a family.

Attaway has been an inspirational camp to my son. He will come back as many times as possible. Thanks so much for helping my son's summer be another great one to remember!

AFFORDABILITY

Due to the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals (**including the anonymous donor from Baltimore**), our scholarship program was once again able to keep costs down to a reasonable level for all parents. The average scholarship for the 16 campers and CITs who received support was \$1,315 which brings our sixteen-year total to \$231,000 in scholarships awarded.

Major gift and grant support in FY11 was received from:

The Joseph E. & Marjorie B. Jones Foundation

The Alexander and Catherine Savich Family Foundation

The Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation

The Holly and George Stone Family Foundation

Dart Group II Foundation

The Abramson Family Foundation

The Columbia Rotary Club

The Horizon Foundation

United Way of Central Maryland



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 Group 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) and specifying Camp Attaway as the beneficiary.

THE FUTURE OF CAMP ATTAWAY

Parent tuition payments for 2011 continued to cover approximately a third 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.

Under the guidance of **Leadership Howard County**, we will develop a strategic plan for the next ten years. This plan will ideally structure board development, provide leadership transition and identify additional resources and future considerations. We still hope to one day find a permanent home for camp and expand the program to a second three week session.

You do such wonderful things for the children. I would love to see the camp expanded.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Last year, our Friends of Attaway Campaign raised over \$17,000 in individual contributions. This year, we are hoping to raise \$20,000 with your support.

Should you be in a position to make a financial contribution, a form and envelope 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.

Thanks to all of you for your kindness and support through these sixteen years. Special thanks to individuals who have made steady contributions including our Board of Directors, Kate Buxton and Brent Stewart our Office Manager, and Dana, Julia, Chris, Erik, Alicia, Liz, and Shannon and our good friends at the accounting firm **Miller & Associates** whose work has kept us on good terms with the IRS.

Thanks also to Chris Doyle for managing our website: www.campattaway.org



To our families, and to you we say:

Happy Holidays and **ATTAWAY!**



Saul N. Lieberman, Ph.D.
Clinical Director

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2011 Board of Directors

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2012 Registration opens mid-February.

Call Dr. Lieberman 410-730-2633

Camp Dates: June 29 - July 20, 2012

