

Camp Attaway News

"He had a great summer of growth to prepare him for high school."

"The bottom line – he loves camp and shows improvement in so many areas during and following camp."

"He has improved coping skills. When upset about something, he removes himself, then returns and explains why he was upset."

"Camp Attaway was a huge success for my son on so many different levels. My son had fun, set goals he made, felt successful, managed impulsivity and so many other positive things."

"My son does very well during camp. There is evident growth and he seems much happier. It is always the best 3 weeks of our lives."

"Improvement with social skills and respecting. The "effects" of camp are long lasting/permanent."

Attaway Parents

CAMP ATTAWAY'S JOYOUS 21ST SEASON

This summer, twenty campers and three Counselors in Training (CITs) with emotional and behavioral disabilities attended the twenty-first season of Camp Attaway. All had received qualifying diagnoses either through their school district's procedures or from community therapists. The campers came with a variety of difficulties ranging from poor peer and family relations, ADHD, compliance, anxiety, and pervasive development disorder and autism, mood disorders, opposition defiant disorder and problems with expressing feelings and coping appropriately. Campers' ages ranged from 7 to 13, with three CITs ages 13-14 years old.



July 7, 2016 County Executive Allan Kittleman visited Camp Attaway. Our campers and counselors presented him with an Attaway T-shirt.

THE ATTAWAY PROGRAM

This year, we returned to **Jeffer's Hill Elementary** in Columbia where Attaway had last operated back in Summer 2013. We are grateful for the efforts of Ellen Giles and HCPSS that allowed Attaway to once again return to this popular, centrally located site. The campers adore this location since they have a one-minute walk next door to the Jeffer's Hill Pool. In addition to swimming, camp activities included sports,



drama, music, games, art, nature, and rock climbing. In the Attaway tradition, each activity was preceded by staff members introducing the behavioral expectations, followed by feedback and self-assessment by campers of their performance and participation. Emphasis was placed on setting 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.

"The staff was amazing. Friendly, yet professional, great role models for the campers and parents."

"Everyone is so very nice and welcoming. Great staff – very positive and great attitude. Beyond excellent!"

"My favorite hallmark of Camp Attaway, among so many positives, was that the encouraging and supportive nature of the staff impacted my son so deeply that his characteristic negativity faded away. ..."

- Attaway Parents

STAFF

Six highly skilled 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 our campers. Staff members represented the following disciplines: special education, elementary education, secondary education, music therapy, clinical counseling, school counseling, clinical psychology, and school psychology. One of our counselors traveled to Maryland all the way from the Netherlands to learn first-hand about Attaway's unique therapeutic recreation program!

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.



NATURE PROGRAM

Through a generous grant from the **Kate Svitek Memorial Family Foundation**, our nature program continued to expand and allowed us to explore different parts of the community around camp. During the ninth season of our nature program, activities were designed to promote responsibility in following through on tasks, trust, group cooperation, adaptability, and problem solving. Activities in-



cluded: 1) an exciting presentation of reptiles, including snakes and turtles, by **Brian Kristal, the Director of Reptile Wonders and Nature Center on the Go**; 2) planting of flower and vegetable seeds for the campers to care for and building of pine cone birdfeeders that were hung in trees surrounding the area used for lunch; 3) campers working together in the predator-prey game learning about the relationships among herbivores, omnivores and carnivores; 4) continued efforts promoting recycling at Jeffer's Hill via our **Attaway Go Green Initiative**; and 5) a trip to Patapsco Valley State Park, where campers enjoyed a picnic lunch, went on a hike, and conducted a stream study. At the stream, campers worked together to complete several water quality tests including pH and dissolved oxygen. In addition to testing the stream, campers also searched for macro invertebrates.

CAMPER FAMILIES

From start to finish, parents were actively involved in the program. They were responsible for excellent campers' attendance (94% daily avg.), punctuality, and preparation each day. We also appreciated their enthusiastic participation in the Parent Night meeting and our Family Picnic.

We continued our 20+ year partnership with Larry Smith, LCSW, who provided the initial parent education and support class for our Attaway families. The remaining parent education and support classes were taught by Peter Aron, LCSW, who works exclusively with children, adolescents and their families. On average, 11 families attended each session. Topics in the parent group sessions included: understanding where emotions, especially strong emotions, come from in the brain and how they overwhelm the ability to think; helping the child get back in regulation, not to try to reason with the child when s/he is activated; helping parents focus on the concept that behaviors generally mean something and serve a function; the importance of figuring out that meaning/function and then help the child make that connection; and emphasizing the importance of parents not getting activated when their child is activated. Other topics included: understanding and coping with the hyperactive child; promoting safety and connection as a way of helping a child calm down; and numerous other critical topics.

Feedback from parents indicated that, as a result of the parent education/support group, the progress made by children and parents during the Camp Attaway session has a greater likelihood of continuing and generalizing into the school and community environments.

"Hearing various approaches to problems is always helpful. Sometimes just small changes to a response or method makes a huge difference."

"Very helpful and feels great to feel 'normal' knowing they go through the same thing

"Helped us approach situations and understand them better."

Camp Attaway Parents

"Really liked the more insightful info, techniques, ways to deal with it, because that's the toughest part. We need tools to get us through every single day."

HOW DID WE DO?

Twenty of the twenty-three parents completed and turned in program evaluations. Overall, the evaluation results were very positive. Families ranked most categories either "Excellent" or "Good," with particular strengths being camper/counselor ratio, positive energy and role models, professional knowledge and expertise, camp activities, and camper growth. Their comments include:

"Much more positive on a regular basis. Doing better, staying calm. Doing much better expressing what he likes or doesn't like. Self-confidence - amazing! Doing better holding a longer conversation.."

"Manners have gotten much better. Articulates feelings very well, uses coping skills to calm down."

"I can't praise Camp Attaway highly enough. Because he had such a difficult school year, his confidence was low, but during and since Attaway, he is more confident than ever!"



"Got over his fear of heights and climbed the rock wall. Overall, improved self-confidence."

ATTAWAY LEADERSHIP

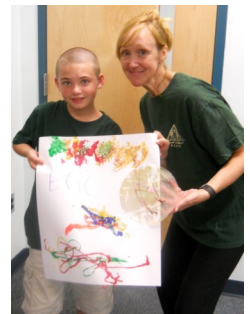
We are happy to report that both Kelly Olsen and Meghan Dean returned to head up camp, with Kelly serving as Program Director and Meghan as Assistant Program Director. Both are special education teachers who have worked at Attaway for several years.

In 2016, Program Director Kelly Olsen received trainer re-certification through Quality Behavioral Solutions (QBS). This allowed her to provide QBS certification training to the entire Camp Attaway staff. Two major components of the training were de-escalation of crises and reduction of the need for therapeutic physical restraint. Staff members' competencies were assessed at the completion of training, and 100% of staff passed the QBS evaluation and received certification.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Continuing for the nineteenth 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.

Our thrice weekly swim at the Jeffers Hill Pool continued to be a highlight for campers and staff, thanks to the efforts of **Rose Woo** and **Rose Vaughn** of **Columbia Aquatics**. We also want to express our appreciation to The **Howard County Public School System**, especially **David Brown** and **Jeffers Hill Elementary**, under the direction of **Principal Patricia Shifflett** and **Assistant Principal Brian Vanisko**, and hard-working building staff, who made operating at Jeffers Hill smooth sailing. We were fortunate again this year to have the services of a gifted artist in residence. Back for her fifteenth year, **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 and to expand the activities to ensure 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, a feeling of accomplishment, and connection to peers and adults. We also collaborated with the University of MD connecting Attaway parents to UMD researchers conducting a study of caregivers of children with complex developmental and mental health needs.



ATTAWAY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016

This past July, Attaway was honored to host several special guests at our new digs at Jeffers Hill Elementary. County Executive Allan H. Kittleman, Board of Education Vice Chairwoman Ellen Flynn Giles, Tracy Locke-Kitt from the Community Foundation, and several family members from the Scherr Family, including attorney Dan Scherr, came to meet our enthusiastic campers and counselors and experience the Attaway magic up close and personal.

Additionally, we are pleased to report that Attaway's connections with **Leadership Howard County** continued to thrive as Leadership Howard County hosted a happy hour to benefit Attaway. Likewise, we are grateful to **Tino's Italian Bistro**, who kindly partnered with Camp Attaway and donated 10% of sales one day this Fall to support our scholarship fund. Camp Attaway also opted to

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2016:

support HopeWorks, another Howard Co. non-profit serving families. We collected food supplies needed by HopeWorks at our Tino's fundraiser. We are grateful for those who packed Tino's.

Lastly, in an effort to diversify Attaway's funding stream and ensure we remain financially strong for the next 20 years, board members Chima Chijioke and Karen Cherry stepped forward to head our critical corporate partnership initiative. We are grateful to Baltimore Gas & Electric, which came on board as our 1st corporate partner. We hope this corporate initiative ultimately includes a diverse group of companies dedicated to supporting the mental health of children and their families.

AFFORDABILITY

Due to the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals, our scholarship program was once again able to offer scholarships to all families who needed them. The average scholarship for the 15 campers who received support was \$1,278, which brings our twenty-one year total to over \$300,000 in scholarships awarded.

Major gift and grant support in FY16 was received from:

The Abramson Family Foundation

Ann Scherr Youth Fund, a fund of the Community

Foundation of Howard County

The Columbia Rotary Club

Community Service Partnership (CSP) grant from Howard County Dept. of Citizens Services

The Community Foundation of Howard County

Dart Group II Foundation

The Kalhert Foundation

The Joseph E. & Marjorie B. Jones Foundation

The Alexander and Catherine Savich Family Foundation

James M. and Margaret V. Stine Foundation

The Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation

The Thomas W. Bradley Foundation

In 2005, we established the Camp Attaway endowment fund at the Community Foundation of Howard County, with generous donations totaling \$15,000 from Dart II Group Foundation and matching funds from the Community Foundation. To ensure the long-term viability of Camp Attaway and make the dream of securing a permanent home for Camp Attaway a reality, we need to grow our endowment. Individual donors wishing to make a contribution to this endowment may do so by directing their funds to the **Community Foundation of Howard County** (<http://www.cfhoco.org>) and specifying Camp Attaway as the beneficiary/fund.

Parent tuition payments for 2016 covered approximately 16% 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 just over \$25,000. This year, in an effort to fill an operating shortage we are facing, we hope to raise \$50,000 from individual donations. To accomplish this goal, it takes a team of loyal and new Attaway supporters. We hope you will join the Attaway family of generous donors and help us reach our target!

A pledge form and envelope are enclosed, or online donations can be made online through **PayPal on our website**. Just click on the **DONATE BUTTON** in the upper right corner of our home page at www.campattaway.org.

We also hope you might consider making a multiple-year donation commitment to promote Camp Attaway's organizational stability and growth and ensure funding for future expansion. Committing to pledges paid out over three, four or five years will ensure Attaway reaches its landmark 25th Anniversary fiscally strong and able to serve more children and families in need.

For United Way Giving please **DESIGNATE CAMP ATTAWAY #2986**.

Also, an easy way to help Attaway is when shopping at **Amazon**, first go to smile.amazon and select **Camp Attaway**, and .05% of your purchases are donated to aid our mission.

Lastly, if you have any property or know of a parcel suitable to serve as our permanent home—please be in touch and be our HERO!



Wishing the families we are honored to serve and the Attaway family of loyal supporters....

Very Happy Holidays!

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Saul N. Lieberman, Ph.D.
Camp Founder & Clinical Director and
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Registration opens February 2017

Call Dr. Lieberman 410-730-2633

Camp Dates: June 30 - July 21, 2017