



2017 THERAPEUTIC AND EDUCATIONAL CAMP SESSION REPORT

The 22nd Therapeutic and Educational Camp Session was held August 20th-26th, 2017. The program served 122 HIV/AIDS impacted youth between the ages of 5-17, and 11 young adults, between the ages of 18-25. 83% of the campers were African American, 8% Latino/Latina, 3% Caucasian, 2% Asian American and 4% Biracial. 100% of the campers come from low-income households and only 15% have access to therapeutic and educational programs in their own communities. The campers came from PA, DE, NJ, NY, VA and MD. 230 counselors, medical personnel, professionals and community members volunteered for the session. There were 56 male and 76 female campers.

The following Program Goals were achieved during the camp session:

- To improve the physical and emotional health of the children. **110 therapeutic sessions** (psychotherapy, music therapy, art therapy, sessions with therapeutic dogs, yoga, acupuncture, equine mindfulness based therapy, wilderness based therapy and massage) were offered during the camp week.
- To offer educational sessions that explore issues, problems and concerns common amongst HIV/AIDS infected and/or affected youth. During the camp session, **40 age appropriate educational sessions** were offered on depression, HIV/AIDS, grief, eating disorders, body image, abuse, addiction, conflict resolution, anger management, puberty education and suicide prevention.
- To increase HIV medication adherence. Groups addressing the barriers to adherence and strategies to increase adherence were offered throughout the week. The Drexel College of Medicine launched the first HIV/AIDS gaming app called CD4 HUNTER with our Leaders in Training (LIT's) during the camp session. The LIT's evaluated the game and presented it to our Teen Camp program participants.
- To increase knowledge about HIV/AIDS and to explore attitudes and values regarding this issue. Our HIV/AIDS & Diversity Training provided to the counselors offers a supportive space to explore these issues.
- To give the children and adolescents attending our programs the chance to feel free from the secret of HIV/AIDS and have fun – just like any other kids! During the camp week, we provided **145 recreational programs**. These included arts & crafts, archery, karate, swimming, fishing, hiking, go-kart racing, a one man side show, Hedgerow Theatre, miniature golf, dodge ball, basketball, horseback riding, Moon Bounce, hip hop dancing and visits with small animals. The Leaders in Training created a wall of "Random Thoughts and Acts of Kindness" that filled up with sticky notes full of positive quotes and messages of love and hope. Thanks to some wonderful donors, we were all able to watch the solar eclipse at camp!

Quotes from 2017 Camper Evaluations

Why do you think it is important to have a place like Camp Dreamcatcher?

"Because it's fun." (several campers)

"Yes because it's where kids can feel comfortable to talk." 6 year-old camper

"So you can have an outlet." 13 year-old camper

"Yes, it's our family." 13 year-old camper

"Because it's an educational and emotional camp." 13 year-old camper

"Nobody gets judged at camp." 13 year-old camper

"Because we can't get shot." 8 year-old camper

"You can make a lot of friends." 8 year-old camper

"It's a good place to talk." camper

"Because some kids don't have Love." 12 year-old camper

"Because some kids have depression but at camp it helps a lot." 12 year-old camper

"Because its 70% fun and 20% sad." 11 year-old camper

"Everyone needs a place where you feel welcomed." 15 year-old camper

Is it easier to talk about your feelings at camp?

"Yes because everyone has your back." 11 year-old camper

"People understand where you are coming from." 13 year-old camper

"People will take the time and listen." 11 year-old camper

"There are people that are going through the same thing." 11 year-old camper

"I won't get judged and some people can be rude about HIV." 12 year-old camper

"I would be sent to my room." 9 year-old camper

"This is a safe haven for us all and not everyone has a place like this to go to."

"People know about how I live and love me no matter what." Camper

How are we the same? *"We are all the same color." Younger camper*

How are we different? *"We wear different shirts." Younger camper*

What did you learn at camp? (Responses from 16-17 year-olds)

"Patience and to be respectful and not to judge people and just have fun."

"To show people they are not alone"

"I did not know I could play the drums."

"I learned good communication."

"I learned that I get frustrated easy."

"This last week meant the most to me. It has improved my life by making me feel good about myself. A strength I learned was how to control my feelings."

From the Counselor Evaluations:

98% had a Good-Excellent Experience at camp

100% felt supported by Camp Dreamcatcher staff and volunteers