



Camp I CAN

Camp Including Children with Autism Now

Imagine wanting to play with others and not having the words to ask. Imagine being asked to play soccer and feeling utterly confused and frightened by all the running and yelling. Imagine being asked to sing songs and clap your hands when the music sounds like thunder booming and loud screeching. Imagine being asked to hold hands and stand in line when the touch of another can feel like needles piercing your skin. Such is the world of persons with autism.

Now imagine a place where children with autism could have fun, share in meaningful, recreational activities and be supported by those who understand their unique needs. This is Camp I CAN—Camp Including Children with Autism Now.

WHO?

The San Diego County Chapter of the Autism Society of America in collaboration with the Mission Valley/Toby Wells YMCA sponsors Camp I CAN. The first camp was held in August of 2002. The camp provides 100 children, ages 6 to 12 years, with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) the time of their young lives. In addition, there is one week of Teen Camp I CAN for 13 to 17 year olds. Most of the children in attendance have never before successfully participated in camp.

WHAT?

Camp I CAN is a summer day camp for children with ASD living in San Diego County. Camp I CAN provides community based, daily, field trips to include such places as San Diego Ice Arena, Boomers and Knott's Soak City. Camp I CAN provides much needed respite for the families and caregivers.

WHEN?

Camp I CAN is a summer day camp held during July and August. The camp is open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday thru Friday.

WHERE?

The Mission Valley/Toby Wells YMCA in San Diego, CA and Palomar YMCA in Escondido, CA.

WHY?

In California, it is estimated that 1 in 166 persons currently have autism. The demand and need for recreation programs grows every year. Children with autism deserve a chance to have the same, fun, summer camp experience as typical children.

The goal of Camp I CAN is to add a meaningful dimension to the lives of the participants and their families in a fun, structured and safe environment. Because many children with ASD have limited understanding of danger, each child has a trained, one-on-one aide to assist them with social and recreation experiences. There has never before been a camp designed specifically for children with autism in San Diego County.

HOW?

Camp I CAN is funded entirely through grants, donations and fundraisers held throughout the year. All of the money raised goes directly to pay for one-on-one camp aides, camp supervision and field trip costs. The projected budget is \$90,000.00 with over 80% of this money used to pay for one-on-one staffing. The contributions we receive enable us to expand and develop this much-needed program. In previous years there have been waiting lists of children who could not attend due to our funding limitations.

Through the dedication and hard work of the San Diego County Chapter of the Autism Society of America, Camp I CAN has become a reality.

