

CAMP QUALITY

an extraordinary experience for extraordinary kids

by Clara Butikofer

Just doing everyday things...for a child living with cancer, this is probably what is missed the most. In 1983, Vera Entwistle was inspired to create Camp Quality after this sentiment was shared with her by a young cancer patient. The organization originated in Australia, and has since spread worldwide. Camp Quality provides support for children with cancer and their families, through a weeklong residential summer camp and year round planned events. In Canada, Camp Quality started in 1988 and was launched locally in 2001. Northwestern Ontario is one of 7 programs in Canada and the work done by these programs is a remarkable feat for a group of volunteers. Countless volunteer hours have been contributed locally. Camp Quality volunteers are not out to find a cure, but rather to make a child's time in treatment and in remission less stressful.

The name, Camp Quality, inspires the local camp organizing committee to ensure that everything about the experience will be top quality. Camp Duncan on East Loon Lake is the summer setting. A mini community is created on site including a "clinic" with residential medical staff. Medication is administered



on the way to swimming, boating, crafts and field trips. However, the best medicine of laughter is always available in abundance. The camp also has excellent food, program planners, lifeguards, companion supporters, and housekeeping. Bakers, entertainers, boat drivers, and special visitors enthusiastically contribute to the camp.

A beautiful yearbook is made every year to chronicle the fun experiences.

The campers, ages 3-18 including siblings, are partnered with an adult companion. Jeff Heringer, a companion

since 2003, recently wrote about volunteering, "...The real reason is the kids. It's such a privilege just to know these kids, and to be able to watch them grow every year." He goes on to say, "They inspire me to be a better person in my life, and to keep striving for my goals. So maybe the kids thank us for volunteering every year, but it's really them who should be thanked. They give back something that is worth so much more than a week at work could ever pay...hope and inspiration."

Parents of the campers may be hesitant at first, but quickly realize that the mentoring and exceptionally well organized camping experience is worthwhile. They help pack the pranks, costumes, and clothes and have a week of respite while meeting other parents with similar experiences. The camp is free of charge and expenses are compensated. An annual winter camp weekend is planned for the whole family in February.

When Vera had accomplished getting her camp programs running successfully, she tackled her next goal of an educational



program geared to dispelling the myths of cancer. The Camp Quality Puppet Program was created and was launched locally in 2007. Summer camp volunteer, Julie Ready, inspired her friends in Beta Sigma Phi Sorority - Chapter Laureate Gamma Zeta to take on the task. They visit schools with the child size puppets and have two performances for K- 3 and grades 4-6. The puppets and the puppeteers are well received, are asked many questions and accomplish their mission of creating an empathetic and informed audience. The

troupe hopes to be hitting the roads of NWO in the fall and will be looking for bookings. They will rotate through the local schools every 3 years.

All who contribute to Camp Quality have earned the rewards that Jeff expressed. Camp Quality is an organization that is lead by the heart. Visit the Camp Quality website for more information on how to become a volunteer or to contribute: www.campquality.com, email directornwo@campquality.com or call 807-577-0059.


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