

Wanakita marks 30 years of hemophilia camp

By Sam Gillett

Camp Wanakita marked 30 years of offering camp experiences to children living with hemophilia this summer.

Since the 1990s, 50-60 kids attend the two-week program organized by Hemophilia Ontario, where they participate in regular camp activities and receive special instruction on hemophilia-related healthcare practices.

Hemophilia is a bleeding disorder whereby blood does not clot properly, so those living with the condition must learn to self-infuse blood.

“The goal is to get kids away from their parents and learn to self-infuse, and give themselves their own medication,” said Luke Chase, a senior member of the programming team.

Chase, who lives with hemophilia, came through the program himself.

“A lot of hemophiliacs are really sheltered,” he said, mentioning how fear of accidents means lots of activities seem off-limits due to risk of internal or external bleeding.

“Through these two weeks, they get to really become independent.”

Nurse Betty Ann Paradis remembers Chase when he first attended the camp. She has helped out since the program began.

Some of the children were born HIV-positive, making it difficult to find a camp willing to host the program.

Paradis applauded Wanakita’s director at the time, Steve Hemming, for taking the leap.



Camp Wanakita director Andy Gruppe (far right) with hemophilia camp nurses and program leaders. *Submitted.*

“Because the nurses were there, they could have their freedom,” she said. “They learned how to interact with other children.”

Paradis said she enjoyed watching youngsters become more confident.

“It’s wonderful because we’re there, we see the children grow in their skills,” she said.

For Chase, “it was a lot to be away from my family, especially for the first time, for a week.”

Jumping on a trampoline, and playing certain sports; those were activities Chase didn’t have a chance to do before coming to the Wanakita program.

As a leader, he said he finds it rewarding to see kids gain confidence in themselves and their skills at managing their condition alongside professional nursing help.

His favourite kind of activity at the camp now is creative programming, where kids

can experiment with zany activities, dramatic ideas and new games. Once the campers hosted their own version of *Master Chef*.

“It allows you to create so much more of a unique experience,” he said.

As he looks back at his time at the camp, Chase said, “It was amazing what the program did to me for my self-confidence.”

KEGEL

HEATING & COOLING

DON'T FORGET!

To book in your annual maintenance on your heating system!

Call Kegel Heating & Cooling to stay warm this winter!

705-341-9170

info@kegelheatingandcooling.ca

FRENCH SEPTIC PUMPING



SERVING HALIBURTON Area For Over 40 Years!

Septic and Holding Tank Pumping • Fast Response
Experienced Servicemen • Real Estate Inspections



705-457-1152 • 705-286-1178

6798 Hwy 35, Coboconk, ON
www.shepherdenvironmental.ca