

Camp Sunrise 2009 Summer Camp Program Report

Statewide Camp for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS Continues to Respond to Need



Camp Sunrise, Ohio's only camp for children impacted by HIV/AIDS, took place the week of August 14-22, 2009 and proved to be a stress-free week for the youth in attendance. Camp Sunrise accepted 95 youth to the program this year. The number of children living in families where one or both parents has HIV/AIDS continues to grow, as does the need for a safe, supportive environment like Camp Sunrise. The campers who were accepted to Camp Sunrise in 2009 came from areas all over the state of Ohio: 54% - Cleveland, 25% - Columbus, 7% - Toledo, 4% - Dayton, 7% - Cincinnati, and 3% - other areas in Ohio. The demographic breakdown was as follows: 43% male, 57% female; 49% African American, 15% Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, 15% multi-racial, and 2% African.

Camp Sunrise rented the facilities at a YMCA camp in Southern Ohio for the week of camp. Daily activities included nature studies, hiking, music, canoeing, arts/crafts, expressive arts, creative writing, sports, swimming, and teambuilding activities. All of the activities at Camp Sunrise are age-appropriate, meeting the skill levels of all age groups attending the camp. The 2009 schedule also included volunteer-lead electives, such as Weird Science (fun experiments for campers who like science), Dance, Water Polo, and Scuba. It is helpful to be able to use volunteers for leadership roles at camp such as the Electives Program, which breaks away from traditional camp activities. This allows our volunteer staff to be able to teach the youth new skills while giving the campers a chance to develop talents that they may be reluctant to try at home.

This year, Camp Sunrise received funding from the Cleveland Colectivo to start a new program at camp called "Sleeping Under the Stars". This program gave campers the opportunity to spend one night at camp sleeping in tents and making their breakfast over a campfire. The campers were thrilled to be able to participate in this activity, and many of them had never before experienced tent camping. We hope to be able to continue this program in the future.

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Camp Sunrise incorporates educational and emotional support programs to help youth cope with HIV/AIDS as a family disease. Since the overwhelming majority of individuals living with HIV/AIDS are also struggling with poverty, the Camp Sunrise staff and Board of Directors work tirelessly throughout the year to raise enough money to fully cover all costs for participating children.

While the week of camp gives the children a break from the day-to-day stressors they deal with in their own lives, Camp Sunrise would like to do more for these youth through year round programming. In order to coordinate more events and retreats throughout the year, it is necessary for Camp Sunrise to increase revenue through grants, fundraisers, corporate and individual donations. Camp Sunrise will participate in AIDS Walk Central Ohio and various other community events over the next year to raise awareness about HIV.

