

Winter Camp for the Blind 2020

Cabinet Report for June 13, 2020

Year 2020 marked the 51st season for the Winter Camp for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Initially started in 1969 as a program of the Battle Creek Public schools, it later came under the management of Region 3 Lions Clubs and then District 11-B1. The camp has been an important part of life for the blind and visually impaired community, with several of the campers attending for 30 years or more. Camp dates are always the first full weekend of February. We were blessed with great weather and some snow, and the Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center staff and facility were wonderful as usual.

This year, we had 56 campers signed up, 55 of which attended. The cancelation of a sighted companion was due to illness. Once again, we had the most attendees from Districts A1 and A2, but we had campers from all of the other districts except E-1 and E2, probably due to the distance and transportation limitations. We had 11 new campers and 2 leader dogs. This is very much a family type atmosphere, and the new campers were taken in like old friends. Several want to attend Summer Camp for the Blind in August. It seems our promotional efforts have paid off, and with several of our normal attendees missing this year, we could have a space issue in coming years. Also in attendance and helping out were DG Michael Scott, 1VDG David Anderson, and dignitaries from around the district who came to visit and help.

Over 50 volunteers came from Napoleon, Ann Arbor Evening; Battle Creek Cereal City; Battle Creek Host; Bedford Area Lions and Elsa Lioness; Clinton Lions; Dexter Lions; Jackson Host; Marshal; Munith; Muskegon; Napoleon; Pennfield. We had great assistance from the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy, all of whom were very polite, and very helpful. It would be difficult for us to accomplish a successful camp without the help of these young adults. Of course, I have a great group of committed volunteers who help plan and execute the camp. IPDG Roger Spriggs, PCC Barry and Peggy Allen, Lion Art Turner, Lion Michael Head, Lion Ron Kohmescher, Lion Bea Furman, Lion John Koerner, Lion Jerry Mackey, and in remembrance, Lion Pat Stiff. Lion Cathy Koning was a new addition to our planning group, and she and Bea Furman will be taking on more a leadership role in the future. We could not operate this camp without the full participation of the District Clubs, our friends in other districts, and our wonderful volunteers.

The camp provides an opportunity for Lions volunteers to experience the true meaning of being Knights of the Blind in a practical way by volunteering to work at camp or in assisting campers with transportation and transfers to and from trains and busses. We encourage all of you to come out to visit if you have not been to a Winter Camp, or sign up to volunteer for the weekend.

We had one health related incident, in which one of the campers had an allergic reaction to one of the food ingredients. Lion Mike Struwin, our first responder, was immediately on the scene, and called in the support of the Johnstown Fire Dept. The camper recovered in a few hours after medical treatment. This was unfortunate, and we will be making sure we have accurate information regarding food allergies, and that the communication of that information is made to the camp kitchen staff in a timely manner.

We had our usual activities of bingo, crafts, wildlife handling, vesper service, technology demonstrations, chess, and outdoor activities such as the nature walk to the bird cabin, and the horse drawn wagon ride. This year, we added a Cranial Sacral demonstration facilitated by a professional in the field. We have been missing the use of Snowmobiles as an outdoor activity, but Lion John Koerner brought a 4x4 off road vehicle to give exciting rides through the outdoor center, which was a big hit. We also got a couple of campers in Snow Shoes, which they enjoyed.

The First Congregational Church choir, Lion Bea Furman, and perennial favorite Tyrone Hamilton entertained the campers who put on a lively talent show themselves on Saturday night. Veteran Camper Wanda Anderson and new camper Leon McCullough were crowned Camp Queen and King. Daryl Goldsmith won the free campership raffle, and he is excited to return.

Of course, one of the favorite activities of Winter Camp is an opportunity for the campers to just visit and have fellowship with each other, meet new people, and re-acquaint with old friends.

Camp finances are stable for next year, with a carryover balance of around \$3800, due to the generosity of District 11-B1 clubs, other state districts, the Knights of Pythias, and several individuals. Local clubs are helping campers with transportation and tuition, and we thank them for their generosity and caring for our visually impaired community. We will need to continue to promote camp with our District Clubs, encourage clubs to provide financial assistance to individuals, and seek grants to ensure the financial viability and continued operation of the camp.

Looking forward to 2021, I do have concerns about the Coronavirus/Covid-19 situation, and how that may affect Winter Camp. Due to the age of our campers, and close confines of the residential quarters, we will have to look closely at what the situation is this fall and winter, and how we can ensure campers health and safety. I feel fortunate that we were able to hold camp when we did, and I am thankful to have not heard of any campers or volunteers who were in attendance that may have contracted the virus. I think we dodged a bullet, given the rapid increase in cases in late February/Early March.

It's been my pleasure to be the administrator of Winter Camp for the Blind and Visually Impaired over the last couple of years, and hope to continue in that role, with the help of dedicated committee members, and support of District 11-B1.

Respectfully submitted,
Lion Roger Bosse