*44 year tradition continues*

*San Luis Obispo, CA* – Camp Hapitok, a residential summer camp for SLO County children with speech and language disorders, is going forward with its 45th summer session, based on new developments from the SLO County Office of Education. In January the Friends of Hapitok, the advisory and fundraising board to Camp Hapitok, learned that its 40+ year joint partnership with the SLO County Office of Education was changing due to the Office’s legal concerns.

This put the Friends of Hapitok in the precarious situation of raising in excess of $80,000 prior to the start of camp this summer.  Dr. James Brescia, Superintendent of SLO County Schools, announced at the SLOCOE Board meeting last Thursday that he is waiving the 2014 SLOCOE bill for Camp Hapitok and is committed to letting Camp Hapitok use the camp facilities “free of charge”.

“We were thrilled by the announcement,” said Marie Larsen.  “Our board met briefly after the meeting and discussed the possibility of a camp for the upcoming summer.” Larsen said the group considered all factors over the weekend and voted to restore camp for 2015.  “We are still not out of the woods fiscally, however based on the outpouring of support from the community we feel we can raise the necessary funds in time for camp,” she said.

A 60-day crowdfunding campaign for Camp Hapitok 2015 has begun.  The Friends of Hapitok is committed to raising at least $55,000 to support this year’s camp with a small amount of seed money remaining to support Camp Hapitok 2016 and beyond. The Friends of Hapitok will continue to work with local service organizations, send their bi-annual newsletter and conduct all other pre-planned fundraisers to help meet their goal.

Teenagers serve as Therapy Individual Goal Reinforcers (TIGRs). They dedicate a month of their summer vacation to be the best friend and teacher to a Hapitok camper. The one-on-one relationship between a camper and teen counselor is unique to Camp Hapitok. Teenage students from San Luis Obispo County work, eat, sleep, learn, and play with their special campers.

The strong bond which forms provides the motivation for the camper to practice and refine communication skills. Teen volunteers are carefully selected through group trainings and evaluations, one of which is a three day training weekend. The teens receive training in child development, communication disorders, safety, and behavioral reinforcement.

There are several important dates for prospective TIGRs.  All training dates are mandatory as well as camp dates.  We recognize that our teens are often busy with sports and other volunteer activities, but we ask that you check your calendar now and plan accordingly.

Campers at Camp Hapitok are SLO County elementary aged students, who are referred by SLO County Speech/Language Pathologists. Campers are students who have an IEP with a primary eligibility of Speech or Language Impairment, or Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Approximately 30 children attend Camp Hapitok each summer.

Campers are paired one-on-one with a TIGR (Teen Volunteer) for 4 weeks of camp. They work on speech, language and social goals pulled from their IEP’s provided by the specialists that work with them through out the school year. TIGRs are trained to find learning opportunities through the day using normal camp activities. Campers participate in speech therapy, a language group, and PE in addition to normal camp activities including; swimming, fishing, arts and crafts, and group games.

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