

Delaware Family's Experience at Variety Club Camp for Children with Disabilities

Tennis, golf, swimming, kickball, even ceramics. It may sound like the typical summer camp experience for any teenager, but for Marissa Hammond of Newark, Delaware, the experience was anything but typical, and her mother didn't have to look far to find the perfect camp for Marissa's needs.

Marissa is 18 years old, has a developmental disability, and participates in Variety Delaware's After School Program. Marissa's mother says she was thrilled to learn of the Variety Club Camp and Developmental Center. *"We looked online and made a number of phone calls to area organizations looking for a camp that would cater to Marissa's needs. She's diagnosed with ADHD, and when we learned of the Variety Club Camp, we were anxious to visit and check it out",* said Margriet Hedden. *"When we got there, Marissa fell in love with the place. It's all she talks about now."*

During her weeklong stay at the Variety Club Camp, Marissa enjoyed making new friends, learned how to play tennis on the camp's outdoor tennis courts, practiced her swimming skills and even found renewed interest in golf. After a day full of exercise and activities, Marissa found relief from the heat in her air-conditioned cabin and spent quality time with her counselor, with whom she became fast friends.

"When she returned home after spending a week at the Variety Club Camp, Marissa said she really missed her new friends from camp. She talked a lot about golfing with her counselor while there, so I took her out to the driving range, and we hit balls. It was very encouraging to see her excitement for the sport return", said Hedden. *"We're already looking for another week on our calendar that Marissa can return. It's just done so much for her confidence and self-esteem. Her social skills grew after that one week at camp, and because of that, I've already seen a positive change in how she interacts with people."* Hedden also added that the entire camp staff, from the counselors to the full-time nursing staff was always professional and friendly with both her and her daughter.

Variety – The Children's Charity: Delaware Division supports Marissa and other children with disabilities throughout the First State. The Delaware Division was established in 2005, and since that time has grown its reach to nearly 500 families in the state. Variety's Delaware Division works closely with the Variety Club Camp, which is located in Worcester Township, Pennsylvania, to make sure Delaware children with disabilities have the same opportunities to grow and gain independence through camp programs as their counterparts in other areas. Variety – The Children's Charity offers after school programs, vitally important medical equipment and family outings. For more information about Variety Delaware or to volunteer, call 302-397-0017. Find us on the web at www.varietydelaware.org.



Marissa Hammond of Newark, DE enjoys a dip in the pool with her new friends at the Variety Club Camp & Developmental Center