



First-time campers ready to go back to Double H

Nathaniel and Aidan Higenes attended summer camp at Double H Ranch for the first time this summer. They are definitely going back next year!



When their mom, Tina Higenes, picked the boys up from the Lake Luzerne, NY, camp, they were already asking to go back next summer.

"They had the most phenomenal time!" said Tina. "That's what it's all about."

The boys were excited, positive, and confident after camp. Each came home with a list of friends to keep in touch with.

Nathaniel, 9 (top photo), and Aidan, 11 (bottom photo), both loved the ropes course the best. And neither was scared to do it. "It's pretty high," Nathaniel said. "You could go higher and higher." Aidan added, "It was just fun!"



"Camp is beyond expectations," Tina said. "It's a total experience. It's a wonderful opportunity. It's childhood fun and normalcy."

The sons of Tina and Allan Higenes of Plainfield, IL, were diagnosed with mitochondrial disease and the following co-occurring issues: autism, immunodeficiency, muscle pain and weakness, and dysautonomia.

But none of that matters at Double H Ranch. "No one talks about disease ... it's awesome," Tina said. While the medical piece is a part of camp, it's not the main focus. Giving kids a typical summer camp experience is.

In addition to the ropes course, the camp offers campfires, crafts, horseback riding, a trip to Six Flags Great Escape to ride roller coasters, swimming, fishing, a hilarious talent show, and so much more.

And everyone is included. "No one is left out, no matter their ability," Tina said. "Some kids have significant challenges; others don't. They accommodate everybody."

One of the highlights from Nathaniel and Aidan's session was the camp counselor who shaved his head. He gave his charges a challenge that if they caught 25 fish, he would shave his head. They did ... and he did!

Tina and Allan first heard about Mito camp through MitoAction. They talked to other families who had sent their kids to camp and heard amazing stories, so they weren't too nervous sending their boys. "I figured it would be a good experience for them," Tina said. "I thought they were ready."

To know their kids would have a fantastic time and be medically safe put Tina and Allan's minds at ease. In addition to that, "It's so beautiful there. There are gorgeous trees and lakes. Great facilities. Everyone is nice. Once you're there and see it, your worries will disappear."

Tina continued, "You can tell the people there really enjoy what they are doing and they have fun with the kids. It's completely handicap-accessible. There are no barriers there. Everyone knows exactly what they're doing."

"It's a well-oiled machine!"

Tina's favorite part about camp was that her kids got some space away from their parents. "It was nice to have a break. They were able to have typical fun."

"We are grateful for MitoAction and the [Matthew Harty] Camper Fund," Tina said. "Camp is so awesome!"

For more information on Double H Ranch, visit <http://www.doublehbranch.org/>.

For more information on camps, visit www.mitoaction.org/mito-camps.



MitoAction has created special partnerships with Camp Korey, Double H Ranch, and Victory Junction as part of our mission to make summer camp a possibility for every child who suffers from mitochondrial disease. Each of these camps is part of the nationally accredited SeriousFun camp network, and offers a safe, medically supervised program that allows Mito kids to be free and safe, meet new friends, have fun, forget about their tubes and meds, and "just be kids." The Matthew Harty Camper Fund helps ensure these kids and families can have this incredible camp experience completely free of charge.