



Camp Korey restores Lyla Gordon's glow

Camp Korey is Lyla Gordon's safe haven.

"I like being there because I don't get bullied there, I don't get talked about there, I don't get judged there," said the daughter of Jessica and Jermaine Chapman of Tricities, WA.



At school, all of those things happen to her. "She has a tough time at school," Jessica said. "Lyla looks different and anything that's different, people have a hard time accepting. People are rude; they ask a lot of questions."

Lyla has ptosis in her left eye, which causes her eyelid to droop, mitochondrial myopathy, Mito Complex IV and V, breathing issues, CoQ10 deficiency, creatine deficiency, sleep apnea, asthma, fatigue, and possible carnitine deficiency.

"Camp is amazing," Jessica said.

"When I pick her up, I see her happiness and her glow. Camp Korey does that for her It gives her that glow. I don't see that the rest of the year."

The three-year veteran of the Carnation, WA, camp feels excitement, happiness, and joy at camp. "I get to talk to people who are like me. I like having conversations without being stared at," Lyla said. "I like to talk to people to hear what they're going through and I can tell them what I'm going through," noting that she likes that they will understand.

"At camp, they listen to me and don't stare and don't ask hurtful questions. I know I won't be stared at, talked about, or messed with at camp. I feel like I belong.

"Camp is a place where I feel safe."

Lyla's confidence takes a hit during the school year because of the bullying, stares, and questions. Even random people she doesn't know will ask her questions and stare at her.

"I see her chin drop and her confidence fold away after hurtful comments," Jessica said. "She



struggles. People should accept her for who she is.”

Who is Lyla? She’s a natural leader and a role model, always willing to help others. “I try to give it my all,” she said. “I have younger siblings (Leilani, Aleeya, and Alisandra) so it’s my instinct. I try to be nice and help others.”



Last year at camp, Lyla was in a group with younger kids. One of the kids was really sad and missed her parents. “So I hung out with her for the whole week. I just wanted to help her.”

That’s who Lyla is.

“Right after camp, she’s more confident. This little light is back,” said Jessica, noting the light went out after her diagnosis. “After camp, she has a couple months of being happy. I get to see her happiness.”

Lyla agreed. “I feel like I’m more up

and hyper and excited when I get back from camp.”

One of Lyla’s favorite parts of camp is Silly-O, the camp-wide food fight, paint fight, goop fight that includes a fire truck spraying everyone with the big fire hose!

Jessica’s favorite part? “When I pick her up she’s so happy, her face glows, and she’s smiling from ear to ear. I don’t get to see that anymore so when I get to see it, that’s a big deal.”

Lyla, 12, will be starting a new school this year as a seventh-grader. “I’m not sure if I can take my confidence to school,” she said. “I will try.”

She *will* bring her ability to be nice to people. She hopes the students at her new school will do the same, but said, “Everyone is capable of being nice but some people are not willing to be nice.

“I’ll bring my kindness and hope to make a difference.”

For more information on Camp Korey, please visit campkorey.org.

For more information on camps, please 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.