



Megan Charney not defined by her disease

Mitochondrial disease doesn't define Megan Charney. That's something she has learned at summer camp.

"Camp taught me to be confident in myself, to be kind and compassionate," she said. "Camp taught me that Mito does not define who I am; I define who I am."

"Even if people doubt I can do things, all I need to do is turn around and say, 'watch me!'"

The Mercer Island, WA, resident has attended Camp Korey for five years.

"Camp is my home away from home," continued the daughter of Pam and Dave Charney. "It's the place I can be myself and not be judged. It's where I found my confidence in myself. It's the greatest place on earth, in my opinion."

Megan has Kearns-Sayre Syndrome; Type 1 diabetes; scoliosis (spinal fusion in 2012); heart block (pacemaker in 2010); ophthalmoplegia; hearing loss (cochlear implant in 2015); ADHD; and hypothyroidism. She also has sleep problems, is heat-intolerant, and tires very easily.

"Megan is learning that she can be a leader, that she is something besides 'the kid with the weird disease,'" said her mom.



Pam has watched Megan's confidence grow at camp. "Every year she comes home from camp with a little more confidence and a little more self-assurance," Pam said. "But especially this year after she was in the BLOCK program. She's talking about going to college for the first time! I think Camp Korey gave her the ability to plan her future."

According to Camp Korey's website, the BLOCK program provides alumni campers with an opportunity to enhance their skill development in areas that are important for future success, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, and decision-making. Participants serve as role models to younger campers, help staff lead cabins and programs, and take part in daily workshops. Participants also have the benefit of year-round opportunities for special camp events and ongoing skill development.

Megan, who will be a senior in high school this fall, said she's seen so many kids do amazing things at camp that people expect they can't do, like ride horses and tackle the ropes course. "They do it and have the most amazing time doing it," she said.

"There's always something fun to do, and everyone at camp encourages creativity, compassion, and it's always a confidence boost to go to camp."

Megan's favorite part about going to camp is seeing new people, trying new things, and the fun things they get to do.



Her favorite things to do at camp? "That's a hard decision to make," she said. "I love everything at camp." Pressed to name just one, she picked Silly-O, the massive food, paint, and goop fight.

She also likes archery, swimming, arts & crafts, performing arts, horseback riding, fishing, boating, talent show, and more!

For Pam, Camp Korey is the one time that Megan is away from home that she doesn't have to worry.

"I know she is in good hands. I know that she will be respected for who she is and that everyone there will understand what she goes through and how hard she has to work every single day.

"Camp Korey is a life-saver for Meggy and for me."

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.