

John Harvey & Dustin Holt's Inspirational Adventure at Camp Discovery



Dustin Holt and John Harvey volunteering as counselors at Camp Discovery

The week of July 10-16 was an inspirational one for John Harvey, Vice President of Sales, Coria Laboratories and Dustin Holt, Midwest District Manager, who volunteered together as camp counselors for teens at Camp Discovery in Minnesota. The camp is sponsored by the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) for children suffering from severe skin diseases that prevent them from participating in mainstream kids' summer activities. Every year, the American Academy of Dermatology sponsors a week of fishing, boating, swimming, water skiing, arts and crafts, and just plain fun. Under the expert care of dermatologists and nurses, Camp Discovery offers campers the opportunity to spend a week among other young people who have similar skin conditions. Many of the counselors have skin conditions as well, and can provide

support and advice to the young campers. Fun, friendship, and independence are on the top of everyone's agenda and everyone shares in the discovery of what it's like to be included.

John Harvey wrote daily emails to his colleagues about his and Dustin's adventures as camp counselors at Camp Discovery that we would like to share with you.

Saturday: Getting to Camp Discovery

Dustin and I began our week meeting the other counselors on Saturday at the airport for what promised to be an eventful week. Well, we didn't know how eventful it would be so soon! After meeting the other counselor volunteers, we boarded a bus for Camp Knutson which is three hours north of Minneapolis. Just one hour into our trip we had to pull over to the side of the interstate because the bus was overheating. After waiting 20 minutes for it to cool down we were back on the road...for only 10 more minutes before it overheated again! We limped into a rest area and unloaded our luggage and waited an hour for the replacement bus to arrive.



John and one of the Campers

We eventually made it into camp and just as we pulled in, a severe thunderstorm rolled in complete with a tornado warning!

After some team building and a brief orientation we settled down for the night.

Sunday, Day 1

On Sunday morning we received a more detailed orientation where we learned about the schedule for the week, direction for the campers and even role



Dustin and Campers at mealtime

played some different scenarios that we were likely to encounter. We also learned about the special needs for the campers based on their respective skin conditions. As the camp description notes, many of the kids have very serious, chronic and sometimes debilitating skin conditions that require special care. There are three dermatologists and several residents here this week to help with their medical needs.



John's KIDS (a.k.a. Frost-eh Monk-ehs)

The kids arrived late in the afternoon to a standing ovation from the counselors complete with signs for each camper, horn blowing and just an all around celebration!!! The early evening was spent with typical logistics with medicine check-in, bunk assignments and team building. Once we got everyone settled, we had a pizza dinner followed by a short hike down to the lake for some sing-a-long camp songs next to a roaring camp fire. We sang, danced, roasted marshmallows and ate s'mores while dodging the biggest mosquitoes I have ever seen. It was an inspiring evening.



Frost-eh Monk-ehs win the scavenger hunt

"MY KIDS," as I will probably refer to them in future updates, are part of a group of seven of the coolest kids I have ever met. Many of them are returning campers and are doing the best to show me the ropes. It has been a long time since I slept in the top bunk!

I forgot to tell you about the scavenger hunt we had before the camp fire. MY KIDS, who named themselves the "Frost-eh Monk-ehs," came in first place and we won a boat trip later in the week to the local Dairy Queen (DQ) which is big stuff here at camp.

Without going into specifics on names of the campers, some of their conditions are: acne fulminans, alopecia totalis, severe atopic dermatitis, lamellar ichthyosis and two campers with epidermolysis bullosa (EB).

Monday, Day 2

Well it is just after 7 AM now and time to wake up the campers. We have on the schedule today: Water Balloon Wars, Spoons, Arts and Crafts, and Nature Walk.

One of the traditions of Camp Discovery is to "sing grace" before every meal. What a wonderful way to start your day with teenagers singing thanks to the Lord!

After breakfast, we had some organized activities. My group, Frost -eh Monk-ehs, had some free time to start the day so we introduced everyone to "spoons." Pretty fun and competitive!! After that, we headed over to the Nature Hut for some local knowledge including matching up pelts, paw prints and descriptions of animals found in and around the camp. Our next activity was Water Wars. The only person in the whole camp to suffer an injury in this activity was ME! During water balloon dodge ball, I severely pulled a calf muscle and can now barely walk. That didn't stop the campers from completely soaking me with water while I lay helpless on the ground!

The most amazing part of today for me was the activities in the after-



Campers enjoying competitive outdoor games



John icing an injured leg and Dustin



Dustin and his TBD Campers at breakfast

noon on the waterfront beach area. Campers had the option of swimming, tubing, wake boarding or fishing. Dustin held court the entire afternoon at the water volleyball net. It was truly amazing to see the Campers completely enjoying themselves in a nonjudgmental environment with no emotional fear. This was the first time for many of the Campers to put on a swimsuit let alone the first time to be in the water. The joy on their faces was indescribable. For those who could not be in the water or sun for long periods of time, we spent the afternoon in the shade playing UNO and Apples to Apples.

Dustin's group named themselves "To Be Determined...TBD." They were under a deadline to come up with a team name!!! Well let me tell you that TBD is the talk of the camp. Besides some amazing camaraderie and team spirit, those boys can put away some food! At every meal they are the first to ask for seconds and sometimes thirds. They are the unofficial camp cheerleaders and one of the last groups to go to sleep every night. By the way, last group to go to sleep last night was after 2 AM.

Our evening was themed around television shows. We played Fear Factor where we had to drink a blended combination of pancakes, mustard, raisins, syrup and spaghetti sauce. The best TV show was Extreme Makeover where counselors were pitted against campers in a game of who could laugh last. The losers got pies in the face, coffee beards or chocolate syrup hair dressing. As you can see from the photo, Dustin lost! I lost too but there is NO photo record of my face being covered in whipped cream!



John and Dustin after losing a game of Extreme Makeover

Another highlight of each day is our evening camp fire sing-a-longs. This time we had staff and counselor improv with many verses of "My grandma don't wear no socks." Finally the day concluded with the staff walking through each cabin singing "Good night sweetheart."

Tuesday, Day 3

Another fantastic day at Camp Discovery!! In the morning my group headed off to the horseback stables for a morning of trail riding while I stayed back and helped two of the doctors change dressings on one of the campers who has severe recessive EB. The whole process from start to finish takes about 2 hours and has to be done 2-3 times a week. Seeing this process first hand and knowing what the camper and his family have to do was truly a life changing experience for me. However, what was even more amazing was despite what I know had to be a painful process, the camper smiled, talked with me about movies and his family and the excitement of getting his learners permit last month.

Dustin's group did the same rotation our group did the day before. The highlight of their morning was the making of memory books during arts and crafts. Their group dominated the water activities around the volleyball court. Dustin's legs are getting eaten alive by tiny organisms that live in the lakes around here, giving him a nasty case of "swimmers itch": He is desperate for some Cloderm.

Our afternoon activity was our long awaited and well earned trip to the DQ!! We all hopped in the boat for the 30 minute trip across three lakes to enjoy some Dilly Bars, dipped cones and flavorful sundaes.



John and the Frost-eh Monk-ehs in a boat on the way to Dairy Queen

We had dinner on the ball field where some local volunteers cooked hot



John, a fellow counselor and two Frost-eh, Monk-eh Campers celebrating victory at the local Dairy Queen

dogs for the campers. After dinner we played games in different groups (Quiddich, Mafia, Soccer, Blinded Battleship, and Noodle Hockey). Until today we had been in separate gender groups but for the evening we mixed up boys and girls. There is a lot of jockeying going on with the boys as they plan their tactics to ask girls out to the dance on Thursday. One of our campers had never been to a dance before and didn't know what to do. It was cool to see the other campers help him out in what must surely be an anxious time for him. I think most of the boys will be successful in the dating department. There are twice as many girls as boys at this year's camp.

In the evening we played Campers vs. the Counselors in capture the flag. One of Dustin's campers took a serious tumble and Dustin had to carry him to the infirmary for some TLC. He received many brownie points from the medical staff for his heroism!!

The boys' cabin is getting a little odorous and it is rumored that we have inspection this afternoon. Can you imagine how ripe the dirty clothes of 21 teenage boys are getting? I would hate to be their parents when they open up their suitcases Friday evening to unpack.

Wednesday, Day 4

As I write this there are severe storms rolling in and may rain out our morning activities of Archery, Ropes, Trust and Canoeing. In the afternoon, we have practice time set up for the Talent Show tonight.

Dustin and I are also going through Diet Coke withdrawals. Water, 1% milk, juice and lemonade have taken the place of our caffeinated beverage of choice!

The highlight of the day was the Camp Talent Show. About half of the campers signed up and entertained the audience by singing, dancing, playing instruments and even a 19 second Rubik's cube solving. Dustin's group did a self-styled rap performance (yes I have video) that earned a standing ovation. During the evening there were times when you were cheering or crying and sometimes both during the same performance. The evening concluded with a raucous performance of Bon Jovi's *Living on a Prayer* that literally "Rocked the House." I thought at one time the floor might cave in with everyone jumping, shouting and singing!!!



Dustin and Campers performing in Talent Show

The boys made their final moves to solidify dates for Thursday's dance" and I don't think everyone settled down for the night until well after 2 AM.

Thursday, Day 5

Things just keep getting better and better here at Camp Discovery!!! Today started off ominously with severe thunderstorms keeping the campers in their cabins a little later than normal but the skies cleared enough for morning activities. This morning the campers are going to selected activities (horseback riding, golf, canoe/kayak, fishing, pottery, bike riding, wakeboarding, etc). The afternoon water/beach activities will end early today so everyone can get ready



John and Campers enjoying a campfire



John and one of the Campers

for the dance. Buses leave at 5:30 AM on Friday so everyone has to be packed tonight. The rumor is that no one goes to bed tonight and we end up having a "lock in" after the dance in the big meeting hall.

My group had Archery, Kayak/Canoe and Woodcraft and Trust courses. It was another day of firsts for many of the campers that had never done any of those activities. It is difficult to imagine being 16 years old and never been around a camp fire. We even had the fire warm enough to cook some mini pizzas. Water activities were cut short by another thunderstorm in the afternoon but that didn't stop the campers from having fun indoors. We broke up into groups and played board games, card games, Spoons, King's Cross, Mafia and many others. It is amazing how much people begin to TALK and LISTEN to each other when the cell phones and I-pods aren't around. Lessons for all of us in any capacity. *Apples to Apples* is by far the most popular game in camp. If you don't have itgo buy it and play it with friends and family (with your cell phones off!!).



Dustin and the TBD Campers

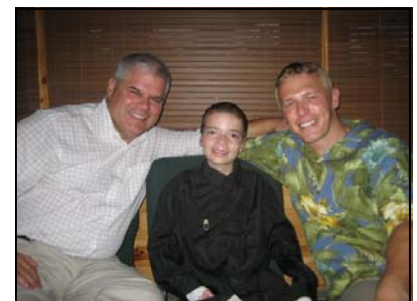
The President of the AAD, Dr. Bill James from Philadelphia, was at the camp today and interacted with both campers and staff. You can tell how proud he is of the camp and the mission of the AAD in continuing this program.

Besides having to pack up a week's worth of very dirty laundry and get it ready for Friday departures, campers had to shower and dress for the evening activities. I was surprised how excited everyone was for the dance. It was like a mini-Prom. I was impressed with the boys attire for the evening, several brought dress shirts and a few even had ties on. The ladies attire was even more fashionable. It was truly inspiring and amazing the pride the campers had in their appearance, especially considering their skin conditions.

The theme of the dance was "Titanic" oriented. We began the evening with hors d'oeuvres and many photos taken of friends, couples and groups. It really was just like a Prom! After a sumptuous chicken dinner, it didn't take long for the dancing to start. Fittingly the music was very generational. I heard Katy Perry and Snoop Dogg sing "California Girls" at least three times and there was a heavy dose of Lady Ga Ga mixed in. However the DJ, who happened to be one of the "Frost-eh Monk-eh's, played a little Journey and Van Halen for me. I can not begin to describe how emotional it is to see children in wheel chairs dancing. Yes, they were dancing just like every other camper. As noted earlier, most of the boys had secured dates for the evening but I found out that the real purpose of asking a girl to the dance was just to guarantee a partner for the slow songs! The dance turned out to be mostly a massive group celebration. It was a true joy to see the endless smiles on everyone's faces. After two hours things began to wind down and campers headed back to the cabins for some final packing and preparation for departure. Once back in the main hall the campers were "locked in" and settled down with blankets and pillows to watch a few movies and write notes to each other in their camp books before the 4 am wake up call. The first movie was "Zoolander" and Dustin and I fell asleep before the second one started. I think we made it till around 1 AM before crashing.



Campers at the Dance



John and Dustin with one of the Campers

Friday, Day 6

Our buses departed promptly at 5:30 AM back to the airport. It was sad to tell the Campers goodbye after developing relationships with them during the week. I am not sure about Dustin but I shed a few tears when giving final hugs to MY KIDS.

Dustin and I are ready to catch up on some much needed sleep. Keeping up with teenagers for a week is exhausting.

To summarize the experience we shared is almost impossible. It was inspirational, motivating, joyous and a lot of fun and we are both looking forward to volunteering again next summer.

John Harvey
Vice President of Sales
Coria Laboratories
A Division of Valeant Pharmaceuticals
3801 Hulen St
Fort Worth, TX 76107



John and two campers at the dance



Dustin and the TBD Campers