

Camp Red Leaf Backgrounder



The only American Camp Association accredited camp serving both children and adults with disabilities in metropolitan Chicago, JCYS Camp Red Leaf provides overnight summer camp and weekend respite care for youth and adults with developmental disabilities, emotional and behavioral needs. Located on 180 acres in Ingleside, Illinois, Camp Red Leaf programs encourage independence in a natural environment, increases each individual's self-esteem, helps to promote interaction with other campers, and improves social skills within a group.

The lodge and facilities at Camp Red Leaf are fully wheelchair and handicap accessible, including the Sacks Family Tree House which allows individuals of all abilities to experience the feeling of "climbing" higher and higher among tree branches. This one-of-a-kind tree house features an indoor space large enough for campers to spend a night under the stars and a back porch overlooking the marsh and campfire below. Nothing is outside the limits of possibilities at Camp Red Leaf, where the dock at Lake Wooster is equipped for wheelchair access, the outdoor pool is outfitted with a lift and accessible bathrooms, and even the climbing wall and zipline are available for the adventurous camper.

The week-long and weekend programs at Camp Red Leaf enhance the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their caregivers through:

Motor Skill Development Campers participate in games and athletics that facilitate the development of gross motor skills, coordination and fine motor skills. Campers play traditional sports like basketball, soccer, kickball and archery, and participate in a low and high ropes course.

New and Lasting Friendships Each year campers reunite with old friends and also establish new connections throughout the course of each session. Counselors plan activities that accommodate each camper's specific needs in a positive and supportive environment, which in turn fosters campers' self-esteem, self-confidence and emotional well-being.

Life Skills Development Counselors guide campers in the development of critical life skills, which vary widely depending on each individual. These skills range from assistance with dietary habits, personal hygiene and other everyday skills. Counselors model acceptable behavior and use positive reinforcement to encourage each camper to attain his or her specific goals.

Respite Benefits to Families Camp Red Leaf enhances the lives of campers and their families, in part by giving caregivers an opportunity to experience rest, to spend quality time with other family members and friends, and to use the respite break to meet their own mental health needs.

You do an amazing job taking care of all the campers that come (to Camp Red Leaf)! You have such a caring heart for all of us! It is very hard to find special people in the world like you, to do all the special things for people like us!

— Shannon, Adult Camper

I honestly don't know how to express how blessed my family is or how deeply I've been touched by crossing paths with the staff at Camp Red Leaf. I watched as the love, affection and friendship your counselors gave to (my son) helped his personality begin to blossom and his world open up. He has started using a few words. It is the first time I've heard him say anything clearly in years.

— Larry, Parent of a Youth Camper



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