

HISPANIC FAMILY CAMP

EACH SPRING, FAMILY CAMP IS HELD FOR OUR SPANISH SPEAKING FAMILIES AT CAMP JOHN MARC.

Structured similarly to our Family Camp, these families travel down together and spend the weekend engaging with each other, speakers and volunteers. Usually 18-20 families totally almost 100 people, attend the camp.

In addition, a nurse and volunteers are there as well.

Educational sessions are held in Spanish. Doctors, nurses and therapists, primarily from Scottish Rite, come to camp and talk to them about not only Spina Bifida related issues, but about issues specific to the Hispanic community. There are also sessions on educational issues within the schools. The sessions are all translated so that moms and dads both leave with an understanding of how to best address the needs of their child and what options are available to them.

This group is a breakthrough in the Spina Bifida community nationwide and is used as a model on how to teach and grow the Hispanic Spina Bifida Community. Maria Avitia, our Hispanic Group Chair, has spent many hours and years devoted to growing this group, getting them to participate in SBANT activities (like Camp TLC) and outside activities such as wheelchair basketball. It is important for them to become independent and a vital part of society and not stay at home. The Hispanic culture is much different than the Anglo culture in many ways.

Breaking these barriers down is a challenge that has been met and overcome by having such programs as Hispanic Family Camp. It has allowed us to teach this group the importance of taking folic acid and prenatal vitamins to help prevent birth defects such as Spina Bifida. Traditionally they do not take vitamins and much of the food they eat is not fortified with extra vitamins and folic acid.

This camp was instrumental in the growth of the group. We now have several moms that are helping to support our mission and strengthen this community. The older children, many now in their young adulthood, are going to college, experiencing life and are giving back to others. They attend our adult retreats, mentor younger children with Spina Bifida and many are role models in their accomplishments.

The families realize the importance of this camp and work hard to raise money to help offset their expenses which are greater than those of Family Camp. They hold garage sales, sell raffle tickets at their Hispanic Group Talent Show and ask companies who they work with to sponsor them. Education is the key that breaks down barriers. They understand this and are working to change the lives of their children and those to come.

One weekend spent by a family at Camp John Marc, whether they are speaking Spanish or not, can change their lives forever. They appreciate your support!

