

# PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE



Dear Brian,

I want to let you know that I think the "School's Out" summer program you ran for the Beverly Public Schools during the summer of 2010 was an incredible success for Scott. As a parent of a child with Asperger's syndrome, Tourette's syndrome, OCD and ADD it is hard to find suitable summer programs that can fully understand Scott's disabilities and work with him to get along with others socially and increase his social skills. The program you devised took six high-functioning middle-schoolers with varying disabilities and turned them into a cohesive team that, together with you and Dave as counselors, went out and explored the world. You taught the children how to work as a team, to respect each others' differences, how to plan, and how to be confident in going out in the community. Whether the children were taking the train, riding the subway, going into a restaurant, shopping in a store or exploring a museum there was constant social learning going on. Scott would come home each day beaming from each new experience.

The most important part was the outcome of the summer. The kids, who were all loners at the beginning of the summer, were now friends, part of a team, and a support network that followed them in the fall back to middle school. The fact that you spearheaded the idea of the kids continuing on with monthly fieldtrips is genius. As each child takes his turn planning a field trip for the group, you can see the confidence shining that they learned over the summer. As they met at the train station, bound for each autumn and winter fieldtrip, they were like joyful magnets pulled together on the train platform. And most importantly they were simply a group of friends; something I wasn't sure Scott would ever experience.

My deepest gratitude goes out to you for all your hard work, for your skill and ability in working so successfully with these kids, and for your creative innovation in piloting this amazing program. I'm hoping Scott will be able to attend again next summer. I wish you much success in expanding this program to other towns. There are so many children who could benefit.

Sincerely,

Amy Spillert



# PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE



To Whom It May Concern:

My 14 year old son Cody attended a specialized summer camp run by Brian Gordon last summer. He attended this camp with only six other children, with a ratio of 2:6. This was ideal as my son performs best in small settings with good supervision and structured activities. The target population of the camp was teenagers who were having difficulty engaging appropriately with peers. The emphasis was on helping these teenagers to develop more appropriate social skills in this small group setting.

Cody has a long history of having significant difficulties relating to his peers. He tends to tease, antagonize, and attempt to one up them. He also been known to push, shove, and throw small objects. Obviously the unfortunate result is that he has no friends. As you can imagine, this is heartbreaking for any parent.

We were delighted when we were informed that Cody would be attending this camp. We were told they would learn community skills and participate in drama and other forums to help develop his community awareness, confidence, and much needed social skills. In fact he learned to take public transportation, and to interact appropriately in the community as well as developing some ongoing friendships.

We were pleased with the comprehensive nature of this program as it involved campers, families, and camp staff. Family members met with Brian several times during the experience, and camp ended with a party including campers, families, and camp staff. Brian requested emails and phone numbers to share amongst the families to facilitate communication.

My son Cody thought, "Camp was awesome", and that Brian was "really cool". "I loved it, loved seeing everybody and going places". He was delighted to go each day, and hopes to attend again. Brian's sense of humor, playful and easy nature makes him a natural at relating to children of any age.

We were cautiously optimistic at the outset of this venture, and ultimately very pleased by its conclusion. Cody gained many community skills that he has incorporated into his daily life. Additionally he made friends. Real Friends. Other kids to call on the phone, make plans with, and visit. This was more than we hoped for.

Presently Brian, this group, and family volunteers meet monthly for a community activity. The kids plan the entire activity including transportation and money that will be needed. This continuity has been an unexpected benefit of this successful program.

I can highly recommend this camp experience for any teenager in need of developing social skills and building confidence. It is our sincere hope that Cody is afforded this experience next summer as well.

Sincerely,

Donna Blume, Parent

