

What Summers at Camp Sno-Mo Mean for Lexi, Camper Since 2007



The saying on Easterseals Camp Sno-Mo t-shirt is one repeat campers like Lexi know well: “The only disability is a bad attitude.” Now 29, she’s found her groove there almost every summer since middle school. Her favorite activity is walking to Camp Bell at Hidden Valley to go horseback riding, with crafting and swimming not far behind.

Lexi is such a fan of Sno-Mo that if her mother, Mariellen, mentions it too early in the year, Lexi will start calling the camp office and even begin packing. Mariellen shares Lexi’s enthusiasm for camp. “Camp is life-altering. It’s a huge break and respite for families. For kids, it’s amazing. It makes all the difference in the world.”

Lexi, who has autism, spends up to three weeks at camp each summer. While she is very independent, her mom still opts for her to receive one-to-one care

while at Sno-Mo. Mariellen says direct care fosters camaraderie and a positive experience for Lexi.

Over the years, Sno-Mo has had a tremendous impact on Lexi’s personal growth. “It’s taught her independence, self-reliance, and given a boost to her self-esteem,” Mariellen says. She’s benefited from sharing the experience of camp with other kids, too, because “while you’re learning, you’re also sharing,” Mariellen says.

By going to camp and spending time away from home, Lexi has developed important self-advocacy skills and the ability to trust people outside her family. “The first time I left her was hard,” Mariellen says. “It was like the first time your kid goes to school. You want them to believe everything will be okay, and you need to believe it, too. It requires a lot of trust. It’s a high bar to meet. But Sno-Mo always scales it with ease.”

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For Lexi’s family, her weeks away provide a much-needed break from caregiving, with time for quiet dinners out and hobbies like reading and knitting. “With camp, it’s like someone gave you the gift of time.”

When asked what Camp Sno-Mo has meant for Lexi, Mariellen and her family, Mariellen responds: “To be able to send Lexi to camp is to be able to be like any other family in the community. Camp Sno-Mo lets Lexi have a typical experience in a very atypical life.”