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Summer camp sidekicks Rowyn and Kari

Another Happy Camper at the Belle Chasse YMCA

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This year was off to a rough start for Rowyn and her mother. Rowyn is a 5-year old girl with autism spectrum disorder and is non-verbal. She also has a sensory disorder that prevents her from participating in groups and other noisy activities. Earlier this year her mom was forced to transfer from full to part-time employment because she could not find daycare or afterschool care for her daughter. This made a huge, negative impact on her already tight budget.

As she began planning for the summer she discovered that the camp Rowyn normally attended closed due to staffing shortages. She decided to apply for YMCA summer camp financial assistance. Luckily, the Belle Chasse YMCA was

able to provide the assistance and enroll Rowyn. Her mom was grateful to find a camp where Rowyn could continue to make progress with socialization.

On the first day of camp, the staff quickly realized what close supervision Rowyn would need after she repeatedly tried to jump into the swimming pool. Unfortunately, there simply was not enough staff to accompany her full time.

In search of a solution, we reached out to a long-time supporter of the YMCA Children’s United Benefits and Services (YCUBS) diverse abilities programs. This special benefactor generously agreed to fund a full-time “shadow” to help us meet Rowyn’s needs. Within a week we found Kari, a K-1 special education teacher on summer break, who accepted the position. Rowyn and Kari quickly bonded and became inseparable. Thanks to our anonymous YCUBS donor and the determination of our team, Rowyn is having a great summer! She enjoys art and physical activities including structured one-on-one swimming lessons with our aquatics director.

For more information about the YMCA of Greater New Orleans and to stay up-to-date with community programs and events, join our mailing list or follow us on social media:



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YMCA OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS
320 Metairie Hammond Hwy, Ste. 321
Metairie, LA 70005
PH# (504) 568-9622 FAX# (504) 533-0080

