

Camp Is A Many Splendoured Thing ... *... continued from front page*

greet us everyday and the words, "Bye bye, see you soon" leave us eager for the next. At ASK Camp, everyone is able, everything goes and anything is possible! For the entire ASK Camp community, the sky's the limit!!!

2006 marks my fourth summer working at ASK Camp. For the first time, I was given the responsibility and privilege of being the Director of the entire camp. Hoping that my previous experience both at camp and in working with children with autism would carry me through, I happily and

eagerly accepted the position. What a smart decision! This past summer has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have been so fortunate to get to know each of the returning campers better than in the past and to meet and get to know all the new campers. I loved greeting both campers and their amazing families each morning and spending the majority of the day floating around the rooms to see who needed a tickle, a hug, or a partner in a game. What a fun summer we've all had! Thanks to everyone for making my Director

experience so incredible. You all hold a special place in my heart. 😊

*Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me
at all
Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me
at all*

– Maya Angelou



Karen Hastings: Volunteer Extraordinaire

by Crystal Tancredi

The ASK Camp journey began over fifteen years ago, the dream of a focused and determined group of parents of children living with autism. They had often been told that their children would never successfully attend a day camp.

Enter Karen Hastings. Her long and fruitful association with ASK Camp began that year. At the tender age of sixteen, seeking summer work, she was plunged into the fledgling ASK Camp.

At the beginning, she says, she did not fully grasp the core Camp value of care "above and beyond" the call of duty; however, she soon came to

fully appreciate the idea: Staff simply have a passion for making their campers happy and comfortable.

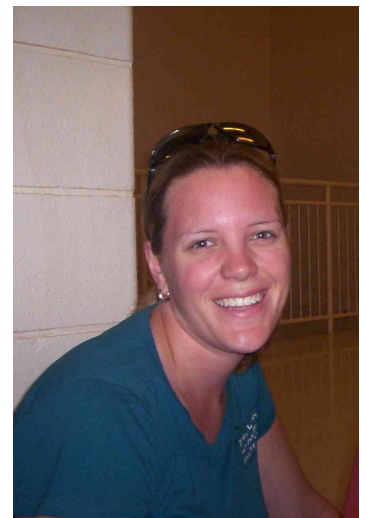
According to Karen, the second pillar of ASK Camp is simple, but radically unconventional: Kids don't fit the programme; the programme fits the kids. There are activities and back-up activities geared to individual camper preferences; and if a camper still "hates" an activity that is planned, further clever accommodations are made. Since children with an ASD spend most of the year struggling to conform, this special place that conforms to them is a terrific refuge.

Her early days at the Camp were a revelation: She learned far more from the campers than they from her. They taught her who they were, as they simply hung out together.

Karen went on to distinguish herself as a Counsellor, Assistant Director, and eventually, Camp Director and volunteer member of the Hiring Committee.

While she now spends her work days as a Family Service Worker with the Children's Aid Society, she often spends her days off, and even her holidays,

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About Autism Ontario

Originally incorporated in 1973 as *The Ontario Society for Autistic Children*, we later became *Autism Society Ontario*, and, in 2006, *Autism Ontario*.

Our Vision:: Acceptance and opportunities for all individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Our Mission:: To ensure that each individual with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society.

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Karen Hastings: Volunteer Extraordinaire

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at ASK Camp, helping the other children she loves.

A third important aspect of Camp is educating the public about the realities of children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Over the years, regular community outings have transformed the campers from strangers to neighbours, and made for a more welcoming community.

One of the most rewarding things for Karen is watching a camper conquer a long-standing fear.

She tells the story of a camper who was so terrified of the water slide, he couldn't be near it, or even watch others play on it.

Over the course of three

summers, she gently guided and supported him, as he moved closer and closer to his goal. Finally, in that third year, she watched with emotion as he scaled the stairs by himself, and rode the slide for the first time.

He was beside himself with excitement over his achievement, and so thankful for her patient, consistent support.

And then, suddenly, it became quite impossible to get him away from that slide!

As Karen puts it, "It's a feeling that never gets old."



One Happy Camper!

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well and often entertains everyone with a song. He loves taking the bus on camp trips. His favourite trip so far was to Canada's Wonderland; he echoed the 'script' from the Ghoster Coaster all that evening: "Hold on, woohoo!"

Most importantly, my boy is well taken care of and treated with affection, respect and dignity. What more could a mom ask for? ♥

