



Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Outreach Programs

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DeafBlind Camp of Texas Has a Successful Second Year

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Abstract: The author shares about the 2017 DeafBlind Camp of Texas (DBCTX), a barrier free camp for DeafBlind adults, as well as plans for DBCTX Jr to be held in 2018.

The DeafBlind Camp of Texas (DBCTX) was started in March of 2016 by Andrew Cohen, Kelly Brittingham, Jacqueline Izaguirre, Todd Huston and Kim Huston. We all wanted the same thing: to have a barrier free camp for DeafBlind adults. With fundraising, lots of hard work and much help from a community of volunteers, our second year was even better than we could have imagined!



Figure 1 Photo of Bernie on the zip line

Camp was held at Variety's Peaceable Kingdom from August 13 through 18. We had over 50 people this year; including interpreters, SSP's, staff and 13 DeafBlind campers from as far away as Germany! We had braille menus, schedules and a 3D-printed tactile map available to our campers. The camp is fully accessible to everyone. There were many activities to sign up for, including zip lining, high swing, high and low ropes, swimming, water slides, rock climbing wall, archery, putt-putt golf, arts and crafts, messy games, bingo and more. Thanks to volunteers, we were able to also provide motorcycle rides, tandem bike rides, horseback riding and yoga! We had two representatives from Nueyes and Sprint giving technical presentations. The campers stayed busy throughout the week!

Thanks to our Support Service Provider (SSP) coordinators, Ingrid Martinez and Mark Mellenger, we were able to introduce a more cohesive schedule with several SSP's to each camper

throughout the week. Incorporating this schedule allowed each SSP to have a shift off every day to enjoy the activities themselves and get some much needed rest. Many of Lamar University and Austin Community College students came back to volunteer again this year. By using this system, we were able to have faction leaders, Doug Rollins, Barbara Johnson and Melinda Bogdanovich, that were on hand for any questions the SSP's may have had. We were very fortunate to be able to have Interpreters this year; Nancy Riley, Molly Sheridan, Shawn Whitley, Rachel Myers and Karah Murray-McKnight. Thanks to the help of Carie Barrett-Loya,



Figure 2 Photo of Amanda, the author's daughter, swimming

we were able to offer 4.0 Board of Educational Interpreters (BEI) and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) continuing educational units (CEU's) this year!



Figure 3 Group photo of DBCTX campers, SSP's and volunteers

The SSP's did an amazing job giving the DeafBlind campers information in their form of communication. This included American Sign Language (ASL), Pidgin Signed English (PSE), Tactile ASL and PSE, platform interpreting, amplified sound, Universal Sign and written media. We all learned a few German signs too! This really empowered the campers to feel comfortable in their surrounding and try new things. We had a couple of

campers that did literally every activity we offered! The campers were very excited to meet and visit with each other. They loved the social time they had. Most are now Facebook friends and keeping in touch. We may have had a love connection too!

It has been truly amazing to make this into a reality; however, we are not stopping here...Not only will we be holding our third annual DBCTX adult camp but we are proud to announce we will have DBCTX Jr for 2018! The camp will be held over Labor Day Weekend (August 31 – September 3, 2018). DBCTX Jr. will be for high school age DeafBlind teens. The camp will also be held at Variety's Peaceable Kingdom with similar activities. However, DBCTX Jr will include some transitional education as well. The roles and how to use SSP and interpreters is going to be introduced to the students, so it may be applicable in the "real world." Self-advocacy and Self-determination skills will be also taught to each student. They will make independent choices in activities. The campers will have the opportunity to meet other DeafBlind teens who are going through similar situations and understand they are not alone. They will be empowered do as much as they can for themselves while in a safe environment. Most of all, we hope to allow them to have a great camp experience!

Our camp is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization. Please remember, we run on donations only. We appreciate all the volunteers from our community. A special thanks to Sarah Goodwin for coordinating transportation. Also a thank you to Edgenie Bellah and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) for providing transportation to some of the campers for the second year. We feel blessed to have such an amazing DeafBlind Community to stand behind us. We know DBCTX Jr. will be as successful as DBCTX! For more information or to donate, go to www.dbctx.org[link opens in a new window](#). Also check us out on social media at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Remember DeafBlind CAN at DBCTX! #Touch You Later!



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