

**(W37) SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS WITH MS**

Children and teens with MS need resources that relate to the particular concerns that they face. It's easy for this demographic – and their families – to feel isolated in the context of what is generally a disease of adults.

This poster provides an overview of the inaugural MS Society of Canada camp specifically for kids with MS. The 3-day camp was the result of collaboration between the MS Society of Canada, the Hospital for Sick Children's Paediatric MS Clinic, and the Easter Seal Society's Camp Merrywood.

The goal of the camp was related to improved quality of life. The program aimed to provide a fun experience for children with MS, where they could escape the stressors of life with MS, and meet others their age who had similar experiences, in a safe and accessible environment. There was no formal programming regarding MS. All travel and camp-related expenses were covered.

There were 21 campers, between the ages of 8 and 19, who came from all across Canada (3 from the United States) to the camp in Perth, Ontario. Two nurses from the Paediatric MS clinic were on site, as were four MS Society of Canada volunteers.

Campers always had a choice regarding which activities to participate in. Activities included water activities (kayaking, sailing, pool), arts and crafts (photography, pottery), drama (karaoke, hip hop classes), life skills (sushi workshop), and an overnight trip. The MS Society also organized a visit from a famous Canadian punk band musician who has MS.

Post-camp evaluations demonstrated the success of the program. While learnings were made following the pilot program, the only significant change – based on camper and parent feedback -- was that the MS Society of Canada camp for kids with MS in 2008 be extended to a full week in duration.

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