

An e-newsletter of the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities

Registration open for Camp ClapHans

Summer camp for kids with special needs opening in June

Registration is under way for Camp ClapHans, a new residential summer camp for children with disabilities that opens in June.

The camp is for kids ages 8 to 16 and is an outreach project of the J. D. McCarty Center. The camp is located on the hospital's campus and features two cabins and an activities building that are located next to an 11-acre lake.

The deadline to register is May 24. The cost for a weekly camp session is \$325, and scholarships are available for families who qualify.

Camp sessions will take place in June and July and will feature themes that focus on different disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, physical disabilities, autism, intellectual disabilities, feeding disorders and sensory issues.

"We will work with families to determine the camp session that will best fit their child's abilities and interests," said Megan Stanek, camp director.

Camp activities will include archery, arts and crafts,



Camp ClapHans features two cabins for campers and is located next to an 11-acre lake. The camp is for children with disabilities and it opens in June in Norman.

canoeing, fishing, field games, horseback riding, hikes and swimming.

To register, contact Stanek at 405.307.2814 or e-mail mstanek@jdmc.org.

Stanek said she is thrilled about opening the camp and sees it as a place where children can have fun, make friends and learn valuable skills.

"We have an exciting summer full of activities, exploration and social programs for our campers," she said. "We are beyond excited in

taking another big step toward beginning a new project of the McCarty Center."

The idea for the camp developed in 1995 when McCarty Center officials discussed options on how to reach more kids with disabilities in the summer months when they are out of school and not receiving therapeutic services, said Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO of the hospital.

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Camp ClapHans

The camp was seen as a way to “reach kids in a fun and exciting way and integrate therapy so that we could maintain or increase their functional level,” Kuestersteffen said.

Officials broke ground on the camp in October 2008.



Empty cabin bunks stand ready for the first campers to arrive this summer at Camp ClapHans.



Camp ClapHans

The Building Block

The Building Block is published by the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities in Norman, Oklahoma, and is authorized by Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO. This publication is distributed via e-mail. If you would like your name removed from our mailing list, please send an e-mail to ggaston@jdmc.org. Write The Building Block on the subject line. Write Please Remove in the message box.

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Fast Facts About Camp ClapHans

Registration: Now open and ends May 24. To register, call 405.307.2814 or e-mail mstanek@jdmc.org.

Age limit: Ages 8 to 16 for kids with special needs.

Cost: \$325 per weekly session. Scholarships are available to families who qualify.

Location: 2002 East Robinson, Norman, Ok, next to an 11-acre lake.

The camp's namesake: Camp ClapHans is named in honor of the late Sammy Jack Claphan, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Oklahoma native. He played football at the University of Oklahoma and earned a degree in special education. He later played in the NFL for the Cleveland Browns and the San Diego Chargers. After retiring from the NFL, he returned to Oklahoma and became a special education teacher. He died in 2001.



Horseback riding and swimming will be some of the activities that campers will enjoy during their stay at Camp ClapHans this summer.



Fishing will be one of the activities enjoyed by Camp ClapHans campers. Other activities will include: Canoeing, horseback riding, star gazing, challenge course, arts & crafts, archery, field games, evening campfire activities and much more.



Camp Sessions

June 9-14

Theme: “Dances with Campers”
Focus: Children with a diagnosis of ADHD

June 16-21

Theme: “Tales and Legends”
Focus: Children with a physical disability

June 23-28

Theme: “Voices of the Wind”
Focus: Children who use alternative methods to communicate

July 7-12

Theme: “Heart of the Wild”
Focus: Children with a diagnosis of autism or intellectual disabilities

July 14-19

Theme: “Beat of a Different Drum”
Focus: Children with sensory issues

July 21-26

Theme: “Spirit of the Harvest”
Focus: Children with feeding disorders

Therapy department shares the spirit of Christmas with outpatient families

When you visit with Mistie Jensen for awhile, you notice that the word “blessed” comes up often. It’s because that’s the way this mother of six from Purcell feels about her husband Monty, their blended family and life in general.

“A real blessing” is also how Jensen described being nominated for the McCarty Center’s therapy department’s outpatient family Christmas project.

For the last six years, the therapists at the McCarty Center have organized Christmas boxes for outpatient families that were struggling a bit. During this time, they have helped more than 40 families. This year, they helped nine families totaling 47 people who were nominated by hospital staff for the outpatient Christmas project.

“Six years ago, we saw a family in need and decided to help,” said speech-language pathologist Chrissy Hancock. “From that one family, the tradition has just grown.

The Christmas boxes contain food for a Christmas dinner, toys, toiletries, books, mittens, gloves and hats.

Monty and Mistie Jensen’s blended family of six, ranging in ages from 7 to 14, include four children with special needs, all of whom receive services at the McCarty Center.

“We’ve been coming to



Chrissy Hancock, right, helps Monty Jensen load a box of food and gifts into his van. The Jensen family was one of nine families selected in 2012 for the J. D. McCarty Center therapy department’s outpatient Christmas project.

the McCarty Center for about a year,” said Mistie Jensen. “We came because of our daughter, Fay. We wanted something better for her. We wanted to improve her communication and skills for daily living so she could be more independent.”

“The passion that the therapists show for our kids is amazing,” added Jensen. They’re doing a pretty awesome job.”

Hancock stated that the outpatient Christmas project demonstrates how closely tied the therapists are to their patients and families. “It’s all about giving,” explained Hancock. “When you give, you get so much more in return.”

“We may not have a lot,” said Jensen, “but we have a lot to be thankful for. Getting this Christmas box is a blessing and it makes our family feel special.”



Above: Phyllis Linker, left, and Alice Brooks with the Washington Senior Citizen’s Center donated nearly 100 lap quilts and wheelchair caddies to the hospital in January.

Below: Sheila Hill, left, and Lisa Porter, right, present a \$420 donation to Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO of the McCarty Center, in January from the Cleveland/McClain County Medical Alliance.



Mobile screening program visits families in Okmulgee

The J. D. McCarty Center's mobile screening program is on the move again.

The screening team headed to Okmulgee on March 8 to meet with families who have children with disabilities and to share information about resources available through the hospital and through state and federal programs.

The hospital's team offered free autism spectrum disorder screenings and free screenings to families to determine if their children qualify for inpatient evaluation and rehabilitative services at the hospital.

Typically, a family must travel to Norman for a screening. Now the mobile program brings that service to them.

"We want to create opportunities for more of Oklahoma's children with special needs to be reached and served by our staff," said Vicki Kuestersteffen, director and CEO of the McCarty Center.

The screenings consist of interviews with parents and their children about the child's medical, social and behavioral history. The screening team members are a nurse, social worker and psychological clinician.

The team shared information about the hospital's comprehensive inpatient evaluations, inpatient respite care and outpatient services, said Richard Mann, the hospital's director of

social services and the coordinator of the mobile program.

The hospital started the mobile screening program in 2012 to reach out to families who live in counties that are underserved by the McCarty Center, which is also a state agency and a specialized pediatric rehab hospital. Last year, the hospital provided services to children in 59 of Oklahoma's 77 counties.

Okmulgee was selected by the hospital as a mobile screening site because it's located in Okmulgee County, which is one of the counties identified as being underserved by the McCarty Center. Employees looked at communities that have not received hospital services within the last year.

The mobile screening program has also been offered in Holdenville and Tishomingo, and Mann said he's received positive feedback from families who met with the screening team in those cities.

"Many families remarked that if we had not traveled the considerable distance to meet them in their community, they would have probably never had the means or motivation to come to the J. D. McCarty Center," he said.

Amy Nix said the program was convenient for her family. Nix lives in Okemah and brought her son, Ruger, to meet the team in Holdenville. It's about a 40-minute drive to Holdenville compared to a nearly two-hour drive to Norman, she said.

She brought Ruger, 3, to meet the screening team because he has speech delays and she was interested in options to help him. Nix knew about the McCarty Center because her older sister was a former patient and had a great experience at the hospital, she said.

Nix said talking with the screening team proved to be helpful and comforting.

"It was nice to know that I'm not alone and that other families are seeking help for their kids with learning disabilities," she said.

Ruger recently completed an inpatient stay at the McCarty Center. Nix said she is grateful for the speech therapy he received and the other skills he learned. For example, he learned to eat with a fork and spoon and now sleeps in his own bed at night. She thinks the latter is because Ruger grew accustomed to having his own room and bed during his stay at the hospital.

Nix also appreciated how accessible employees were when she called and checked on Ruger and asked questions about his day. They helped give her peace of mind.

"You can tell that they care," she said about the employees.

Mann encourages other families to come meet the screening team and learn about programs at the McCarty Center that could help their children.



Parties with a purpose

Teen, child use their birthday celebrations to benefit patients at the McCarty Center

Cole Sparks decided the best way to celebrate his birthday was to give gifts to other kids.

In his party invitation, the 10-year-old said in lieu of gifts for himself, he wanted their help in collecting presents for patients at the J. D. McCarty Center for children with developmental disabilities.

"I want them to have something new," Cole said, while handing out gifts to the patients earlier this year. "I have plenty of stuff."

Cole isn't the only one who chose to share his special day by serving others.

Taylor Ball and her friends with the Bible Study Center in Blanchard celebrated her 18th birthday by passing out goodie bags to the children at the hospital.

Ball said she wanted to visit the patients on her birthday because she is passionate about helping others and because she admires the work done at the McCarty Center.

"I think it's a really cool facility," Ball said. "I can really see God working through the kids and through the people there."

Here's a little insight into how Cole and Ball turned their birthday bashes into acts of benevolence.



Spencer Kilgore, left, helps friend Cole Sparks deliver gifts to patients at the J. D. McCarty Center earlier this year. Cole asked his family and friends to give presents to the kids at the hospital, instead of buying him gifts for his birthday.

Kids helping kids

Jennifer Sparks of Norman believes in the value of giving and helping others and has talked frequently with her two sons about ways they can serve.

One suggestion she has mentioned to the boys is to donate their birthday gifts to other children, especially since her sons' birthdays are at the beginning of the year.

"We don't need any more presents right after Christmas," she said.

This year, Cole decided it was time to donate. He told his mom that he had plenty of toys and wanted to give to others.

The idea for the McCarty Center came up after Sparks, who works at Truman Primary Elementary School in Norman, found out that some of the students at the school

have received services from the hospital.

Sparks liked the idea of giving to a place that has helped Truman students. "It kind of hit close to home."

Cole, a student at Truman Elementary School, loved the idea of helping kids and put his plan into motion. His mom contacted the McCarty Center to get gift ideas, and she and Cole then sent a note in his party invitations about the gift donation.

Cole had a skating party for his 10th birthday in January, and his friends "started bringing in sackfuls of stuff," his mom said.

Some also gave money, which the Sparks family then used to buy more gifts. In total, Sparks estimates that the group spent \$300 on gifts, which included board games, art supplies, puzzles, Play-Doh and crayons.

In January, Cole and some family friends brought the gifts to the patients.

"It feels really good," he said, as he passed out presents.

Patients eagerly played with the gifts. One patient received a wooden cookie set, crayons and construction paper. The little girl, who is deaf, then looked at Cole and signed, "thank you."

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Birthday gifts

Jean Robb, a direct care specialist who works with patients, told Cole how impressed she was with his kindness.

"That's an awesome thing you're doing," Robb said to Cole, with a smile. "Thank you so much."

Sparks said the family cherishes the entire experience and she is so proud of her son for his generosity.

"Cole is kindhearted, caring and just an all-around wonderful sweet kiddo," she said. "His heart is just so big. He's a very, very, giving and loving child."

Cole already has plans for next year's birthday. He wants to raise money to donate food to an animal shelter.

A heart for service

Ball's first visit to the McCarty Center was a few days after her 16th birthday. She came with her mother and some friends from the Bible Study Center to hand out Valentine's Day cards and candy to the patients.

While there, she met a little boy. She was told that he was not talkative and kept to himself. However, the boy began to bond with Ball. He said "baby" to her, held her hand and they threw a ball together.

It was more than a sweet experience for Ball.

"It kind of confirmed to me

that God had given me a special gift of working with children," said the Yukon resident.

The visit to the hospital also motivated her to come back for her next birthday, but a snowstorm hit the metro area that year and changed her plans.

This year, on Feb. 8, Ball was able to make it back to the McCarty Center for her birthday and she brought friends from church. The group passed out Valentine's Day cards and goodie bags to patients.



Taylor Ball, center, celebrates her birthday with her friends from the Bible Study Center in Blanchard. Ball said she wanted to visit the patients at the McCarty Center on her birthday because she is passionate about helping others and because she admires the work done at the hospital.

Ball chose to celebrate her birthday at the hospital because she wanted the day to be about having fun and helping others at the same time. "I wanted to do something that could benefit not just me but everyone around me."

The visit also coincided with the church members' efforts to get their families involved in serving the community. Ball said families from the church helped organize the goodie bags, while others came to help her hand out the gifts at the McCarty Center.

Ball said she and her friends enjoyed interacting with the kids and employees at the hospital.

Narcotics bureau donates seized electronics

Patients at the McCarty Center received some electronic gaming systems and iPods to play with thanks to a donation from the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics.

The bureau provided 15 Sony PSP Go gaming systems and two iPod classics to the McCarty Center on Feb. 27 during a news conference at the hospital's conference center.

The items were seized from a shoplifting ring in 2009, said Mark Woodward, OBN spokesman.

"In 2009, the OBN Highway Interdiction Unit stopped a vehicle on Interstate 40. During a search of the vehicle, agents found several items that were identified as stolen from an electronics store in Chicago, Illinois," Woodward said. "Since insurance had already been paid to the store for the loss of the items, we were unable to return them to the store and the items became property of the state of Oklahoma."

Woodward said seized items are typically sold at auction and the proceeds go back to the narcotics bureau for drug enforcement. In this situation, though, the OBN wanted the game systems and iPods to be donated to the McCarty Center where the patients would benefit from them.