

SPOTLIGHT ON THE TEXAS LIONS CAMP: A MAGICAL PLACE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

By John Eads, CPA-Dallas, CGMA

A 10-year-old boy in a wheelchair talked to me about his week at Texas Lions Camp that summer. He told me: "I spend 51 weeks of the year in a place made just for you and one week in a place made just for kids like me. And it's like heaven on Earth." His words brought tears to my eyes then and still do every time I retell his story.

Since 1953, Texas Lions Camp, founded by Lions members, has been providing a fun-filled camping experience for children with special medical needs, while helping campers gain confidence and build self-esteem. Enrollment for this no-cost magical experience is now open at www.lionscamp.com. Summer 2019 session dates and applications for various medical conditions are available on the camp website.

Texas Lions Camp serves children ages six through 16 who have 48 different physical disabilities, Type 1 diabetes, cancer and Down

syndrome. The application requires submission of medical information by the child's physician. Additionally, a Lion sponsor is required. Any Lion in Texas may serve as a camper's sponsor and parents may contact their local Lions Club for assistance.

Located on 515 acres in the beautiful Hill Country outside Kerrville, Texas Lions Camp is supported by the 24,500+ Lions of Texas and their friends, including nonprofit

foundations, corporations and businesses. Chartered in 1949, the camp has welcomed more than 73,000 children in the past 70 years of operation. We are celebrating our 70th anniversary year. The camp is accredited by the American Camp Association and is licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Texas Lions Camp received a prestigious four-star rating from Charity Navigator in 2018 and is recognized as a gold-level charity by GuideStar. Texas Lions Camp is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



Personally, I have been a Lion since 1966 and my real love is the Texas Lions Camp. My wife and I have volunteered there for more than 40 years. We have seen first hand the incredible difference Texas Lions Camp makes in the lives of the campers. One summer, I spent a day assisting a young girl who could not walk. I managed to talk her out of her wheelchair. We played "horse," wherein I became her legs as she rode on my shoulders most of the day. We participated in many outdoor activities, from hiking and playing ball to dancing and singing around the camp fire. It was one of the best days of my life. The joy and freedom that child experienced is forever embedded in my memory.

One of my goals is that each of the 1,500 camper slots be filled again this summer and achieving it begins with enrollment. Priority is given to new campers and positions are assigned by the order in which completed applications are received. Camp sessions are one-week long and begin each summer in June and end the second week of August.

We need the help of CPAs in Texas. We have found that no matter how much we work on getting the word out about our camp, we are still the best-kept secret. Please help us find eligible children in your communities, and using your client relationships and other business resources, connect us with potential individual and corporate donors and put us in touch with planned giving attorneys and foundations.

We are currently embarking on a master plan that will change the infrastructure of our campus and bring it into the 21st Century by creating new housing for our campers (old structures are over 60 years old), add new capacity with four camps instead of one, and create new avenues of activities and recreation for serving our children. The plan has both capital and endowment elements. In addition to accepting cash donations, memorials and honorariums, we offer many opportunities to make gifts to the camp through wills, life insurance, appreciated marketable securities, gift annuities and other planned giving avenues.

Lions serve. We've created a place where children with special needs find facilities designed for them – and tailored activities allowing them to experience the thrill of therapeutic horseback riding, fishing, swimming, climbing a rock wall or zip lining – even if their arms



and legs don't work on the ground. We help children with diabetes learn how to manage their disease while enjoying sports. We offer life-changing experiences for campers with Down syndrome and cancer. Miracles happen at camp every summer, all day long and we change children's lives. Ask their parents. Texas Lions Camp is magical for special needs children.

If you know a child who potentially could benefit from Texas Lions Camp, check out our website (www.lionscamp.com). Encourage the parent to complete the application. Let's make a positive difference in a child's life.

John Eads, CPA, CGMA, is the current president and chairman of the board of Texas Lions Camp. He has been on the executive committee of the board for the past five years, and is a member and former chair of the Texas Lions Camp Planned Giving and Endowment Committee. He was named to the Texas Lions Hall of Fame in 2010. He has received the highest award of Lions Clubs International, the Ambassador of Goodwill. He has been a Lion member for over 50 years. He is also a practicing CPA in the Dallas area and past president and chairman of the board of the Texas Society of CPAs and the Society's Dallas Chapter.

