August 7, 2019

**Westchester Companies Bring Summer Fun to Camp Serving Homeless and At-Risk Youths**

River Journal

The Brighter Futures Summer Camp run by Lifting Up Westchester is the only camp in Westchester that targets homeless children. This year, 94 children attended the camp which ran for four weeks in July at George Washington School in White Plains.

The campers had a blast– with a little help from local corporations and community groups that hosted a variety of recreational activities including bracelet making, t-shirt decorating and field days to add a bit of spice to the daily camp program. It was often difficult to tell who had more fun – the campers or the volunteers.

Markhoff and Mittman, a White Plains disability law firm, helped run the annual camp carnival for the fifth consecutive year. In addition to running the game booths, the firm brought along AJ Silver, “the cowboy from the Bronx”, who enthralled campers with a series of fast paced lasso and bullwhip tricks accompanied by kid-friendly comedic banter. Campers later had an opportunity to try a few lasso tricks of their own.

Interns from Acadia Realty organized an afternoon of relay races, volleyball and water balloon games and treated campers to a visit from the ice cream truck, a welcome way to cool down from the sweltering heat.

A pizza lunch, kickball games and arts and crafts were hosted by the White Plains Rotary Club which also brought along a cotton candy machine that was a hit with both campers and counselors. One Rotary Club member said “I had such a great time. The kids were all wonderful and it was a gift to share in their company.”

Educators from Clearwater Sloop created an indoor field trip experience by bringing water samples teaming with insects and other aquatic life from the Hudson River to the camp. Campers examined live fish and macroinvertebrates and engaged in hands-on interactive
activities where they learned about aquatic life cycles, adaptations, and the impact humans are having on Hudson River wildlife.

Other groups like Berkeley College and Grace Episcopal Church in White Plains donated supplies including bathing suits, towels, flip flops, goggles, and suntan lotion, items that parents of campers often cannot afford.

Anahaita Kotval, CEO of Lifting Up Westchester, commented, “It’s great when the entire community comes together to add to the fun of our summer camp. These kids normally have so little to look forward to during the summer and it’s a treat to seeing them enjoying a visit from an ice cream truck or experiencing a special afternoon of games and entertainment.” She added that the goal of the Brighter Futures Summer Camp is to build self-esteem, confidence and social skills in at-risk campers and to provide them with an opportunity to just be kids.

The Brighter Futures Summer Camp has operated for more than thirty years. In addition to traditional activities like swimming, sports and arts & crafts, the camp also provides a variety of educational programming to prevent summer academic slide.

For more information on the camp and other youth programs run by Lifting Up Westchester go to www.liftingupwestchester.org.

To view the full article online, please visit: https://riverjournalonline.com/around-town/for-the-local-good/westchester-companies-bring-summer-fun-to-camp-serving-homeless-and-at-risk-youths/16459/