



**YOUTH RALLY
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**The 2017 Youth Rally will
take place July 17th-22nd
in San Diego, CA**

WOCN Southeast Region
1809 Cattleman Drive
Brandon, FL 33511

Dear WOCN Southeast Region,

On behalf of the Youth Rally Board of Directors, I thank you for your generous gift of \$2000 in support of the 2016 Youth Rally on 3/9/2016. Our goal since inception is that no child is ever turned away related to inability to pay registration and/or travel costs, and your gift helped us achieve this once again in 2016.

Our campers (and volunteer team of counselors) live with a variety of congenital birth defects, chronic illness, or physical trauma that has caused disruption to their bowel and/or bladder systems. To our Youth Rally participants, their care providers, and their network of loved ones, your gift is more than monetary - it represents hope. For them, the Youth Rally provides an environment of learning and growth where these children, or varying physical abilities, gain independence and confidence while having FUN with others who are just like them!

The Youth Rally is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and as such operates solely on donations from individuals, support groups, corporate sponsorship, and the ongoing fundraising efforts of its many volunteers.

Words alone cannot express our many thanks for your support. Please note that your gift is a tax deductible one.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Akers
949 Chestnut Oak Drive
St. Charles, MO 63303
registrar@rally4youth.org
314.452.7759

October 15, 2016

Yes. There *IS* a camp for that.

www.Rally4Youth.org

2016 YOUTH RALLY IN SEATTLE, WA



2016 Youth Rally Campers – check out www.YouthRally.org for additional photos & videos!

A PICTURESQUE SETTING The 2016 Youth Rally was hosted at the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle where participants had the luxury of staying at the campus' new downtown dorms. This was the Youth Rally's 2nd visit to Seattle (the first was back in 2013) – and it didn't rain one time once the campers arrived. From the campus center were clear views of Mt. Rainier! Hot sunny days and cool nights were the setting for a jam-packed week of learning, fun, and adventure!

THEY COME FROM ALL OVER This year's Rally hosted 128 campers (picture above) between the ages of 11 and 17 from 38 US states, Canada, Ecuador, Venezuela and Belgium! Notably, 42 campers were experiencing the Youth Rally for their very first time! The Youth Rally staff is a 100% volunteer team of 80 individuals: 62 counselors (many of whom were former campers) and 18 specialty-trained registered nurses, some who also live with the same conditions as the counselors and campers.

Throughout the week, campers had the opportunity to learn more about their own condition as well as those of their counselors and peers. They participated in intimate rap sessions sharing their stories of growing up with medical and physical challenges. Participants got to learn from those who share their own diagnoses and management techniques as well as others within their same age range and gender identification to discuss the sensitive issues that often challenge the self-esteem of adolescents growing up with chronic conditions.

New this year, the campers were guided through "Digging Deep" – a personal journal they were each provided to inspire self-expression through the telling of one's own personal story; empowering hope, courage, and inner strength. The journaling exercises were facilitated in group sessions hosted by the author herself, Rose Offner. In addition to Rose, 2016 Youth Rally special guests included Dr. Bill Reiner, Pediatric Urologist and Adolescent Psychologist who specializes in working with chronically ill children and their families. Perhaps most inspiring however were this year's motivational speakers: Jada Sheeler – former YR camper, now counselor, who spent a semester abroad in Japan, learning every day as she immersed herself in this new culture; and Spencer Kimbro – Youth Rally camper who had recently returned home from Rio de Janeiro where he competed in the 2106 US Paralympic Track and Field trials.

FUNTASTIC On fitness day each participant had the opportunity to challenge their physical self while sampling some of the many activities (climbing wall, basketball, archery, TRX, cycling, Volleyball, Yoga, the list goes on) available at the UW Intramural Activities Center. It's a mystery that anyone had energy left for the talent show – or the (first ever Rally) lip sync battle - that evening, but these kids love a stage and it proved to be another marathon night in the spotlight! On Thursday Rally took over the shores of Green Lake for a day of sunning, swimming, floating, paddle boarding, paddle boating, water cycling, kayaking and field games. We even had some special visitors while at Green Lake... from Ben & Jerry's! The week was topped off with Rally's highly-anticipated graduate dance which hosted an "Under the Sea" theme this year complete with mermaids, sharks, a photo booth, a face painter, a nacho bar, and an amazing array of decorations to set the tone for a first class party!

WHERE THE SURF MEETS THE TURF It is expected that all but those 26 campers who graduated this year will join us next July at San Diego State University in San Diego, CA. Many of those same graduates will be submitting applications for the 2017 Counselor-in-Training leadership program to begin their journey as the next generation of all-star counselors. In the meantime, all of this year's participants have formed lasting friendships, found lifelong mentors, made amazing memories, and thanks to modern technology and social media, will be able to communicate all year long!