

Can the Disabled Go to a Lutheran Camp?

by Neal Norland, St. John Lutheran, Cylinder

Can the disabled go to a Lutheran camp? A simple answer would be yes. I am Neal Norland, and I am 14. I have a physical disability which affects me doing various tasks throughout the regular day. I use a wheelchair to get around most of the time, and I need help at mealtime. Last summer was my fourth year at camp, and it was a lot of fun. This is my story about how Ingham Lutheran Bible Camp changed to make the camp more accessible to people with special needs.

The first year the camp was not really accessible. They used an old door as a ramp to get me into one of the old cabins. The bathrooms were not really accessible, but they helped me get into there. The second year I went to Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, which was more accessible.

By my third year they had the new cabin built at Ingham, and it is fully accessible, complete with a bathroom and a shower. The counselor told the other kids in my cabin that the bathroom in the cabin was for me, since I need extra time, so they would have to go to the bathhouse.

Every year I have gone the staff has been very accommodating with my needs. They had a one-on-one counselor with me besides the cabin counselor, who also helped with the rest of the campers in the cabin, and it has been that way every year.

My experience at camp has helped me from two standpoints. One is that I have grown more in Christ. God made me the way that I am, and I know that He has a purpose for me on this earth.

Second, being at camp shows me how to be an advocate around people I did not know in the past. It's up to me to let people know when I need help. In addition, it helps the one-on-one counselor know that if I have patience and take my time I can be pretty independent.

The camp is willing to do what it takes to make it possible for someone with a disability to go to camp. They really make me feel like part of the group. Lutheran camp can be a great experience for everyone, even if you have a disability. They'll make it work.

For more information on accommodations for disabled campers, please contact the camps directly.

Ingham Okoboji Camping Ministry:

Ingham — 712-867-4170

Okoboji — 712-337-3306

Lutheran Lakeside Camp, Spirit Lake:

712-336-2109

Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp, Story City:

515-733-5271.



Lutheran camps welcome all as valued children of God!

Photos courtesy of Ingham Okoboji Camping Ministry.