



PHABulous

Birmingham PHAB Camps is a local charity. The name originally stood for Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied but is now just the logo. It is a small, totally voluntary organisation that takes a wide selection of both disabled children and disabled young adults away for a week in the July-August holidays. They also take able bodied children and young adults who may be experiencing difficulties or problems in their day to day lives. This is an important philosophy of the camp – the mixing of all abilities with the main aim of having fun! There is a different camp for each age group. While the children and the young adults are away, they take part in a wide range of activities that they may not normally be able to do, from canoeing and archery to raft building and rope walks, along with visits to theme parks, farms and the swimming pool. These young people are given the chance to take part in these activities no matter their ability. Children on the holidays are cared for by teams of volunteers including a qualified nurse and an experienced leader.

I have taken part in activities or events on PHAB camp that I never done before and that I hadn't ever dreamed of doing. These activities mean that young people like myself are able to take part in experiences that we wouldn't normally be able to do. All the young people look out for each other and the disabled kids look out for other disabled kids too. The volunteers make the experiences so much fun and enable us to have such a great time despite our disabilities.

Birmingham PHAB Camps also enables us to create friendships that will last a life time. During the week we are away we get really close to one another through sharing a room, putting our trust in each other during activities, and we are able to find someone else who experiences the same difficulties as ourselves. This makes us feel less 'different'. Once on camp there was a boy who was crying because he was homesick. I was asked to go and speak to him as I had been homesick myself on a previous camp. After chatting to him for a while, the boy said he felt better and was going to give the camp a try. He had a fabulous week and I felt proud that I had helped him.

Seven years ago I received a phone call asking me whether I want to go for a week away with Birmingham PHAB Camps, and I have gone away with them every year since. Now I am passionate about the charity which I help to raise money for whenever I can, by attending sponsored fun runs, quizzes and flag days. But, due to the recession, the charity is receiving less and less donations each year. It costs around £90,000 each year to run the camps. As everyone who works for the charity is a volunteer, there are no wages to pay and their administration costs are less than 1%. This means that virtually every penny that is given to the charity goes directly to the holidays.

If you want any more information about how to volunteer or donate to this magnificent charity, so young people with disabilities or difficulties can enjoy a week of fun and achieve their dreams, please find out more by visiting: www.bhamphabcamps.org.uk

Sophie Abel
PHAB camper

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