



Mile High Leaps And Bounds Helps Children With Disabilities And Their Families

by Mark Smiley, Glendale Cherry Creek Chronicle, November 2013

Annie Huebner and Sarah Davidson are special education teachers in Jefferson County and noticed that families who have children with disabilities are in great need of respite care (especially during the summer months). They decided to start a non-profit dedicated to providing educational and recreational activities for the students they serve while providing respite care for their families throughout the summer. Respite care programs provide planned short-term and time-limited breaks for families in order to support and maintain the primary care giving relationship.

The organization is known as Mile High Leaps And Bounds and was founded in 2010. Heubner, the daughter of Glendale Sports Center Executive Director Debbie Ford, has been involved with helping kids her entire life. She saw this as an opportunity to help kids and families who need it most.

Mile High Leaps and Bounds (MHLB), a 503(c)(3) certified non-profit, seeks to provide free respite care to families lacking the financial resources, appropriate knowledge and access to care and services. Care providers at MHLB are of the highest quality. Implementing curriculum and programming developed by special education teachers with postsecondary degrees in special education. MHLB offers a standard quality of life and growth to each child they serve.

Summer Fun

The majority of their programming is provided during the summer months. "As teachers, we have the ability to provide this service to families during these months," said Heubner. "During the school year, we have a few events that are held in the evenings as we teach during the day. We are growing as an organization and we are excited to hire qualified staff to help with summer programming and hope to provide care throughout the year in the near future."

MHLB is looking forward to increasing the number of families they work with next summer. In the past, the organization has offered three summers of quality, evidence-based and engaging respite care at no cost to the families served. Respite care provided includes education and community-based activities. MHLB also provides recreational activities that children with disabilities would normally not have access to due to numerous barriers such as their varying disabilities and their families' lack of financial resources.



The activities include but are not limited to Dinosaur Ridge, Museum of Nature and Science, IMAX, private classes at the Denver Art Museum, Water World, Rockies games, NSCD sports camps with the Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche, The Butterfly Pavilion, and private classes at the Denver Zoo.

The programming during the respite care is individualized and adapted to meet the needs of each child's unique strengths and needs to engage and learn in the best possible way.

Get Involved

You may ask how one can become involved or volunteer for the worthwhile organization. Due to specific needs of the students and the quality of the respite care they provide, the strategic decision was made to not engage in volunteer work as a method of staffing classroom care. However, MHLB engages volunteers for a number of administrative functions and operational needs of the organization. Volunteers have been used for accounting, strategic planning, and organization development. In-kind donations have also been used in the fundraising efforts of MHLB. Of course, monetary donations and volunteers are always appreciated as there are many families in desperate need of respite care.

Fundraiser

MHLB hosted a fundraiser on October 10, 2013. Sponsors include *Mile High Spirits* who donated 10 percent of sales and *Denver Pizza Company*. Auction item sponsors include *Williams Jewelers of Cherry Creek*, Nuggets tickets donated by Gary Newlin, wine donated by Ted Kijanka, and Vincent Jackson, NFL Pro-bowler and University of Northern Colorado graduate, donated a signed Tampa Bay Buccaneers jersey. They are incredibly grateful for all of the support they received from sponsors and donors. They raised \$5,000 which will provide summer respite care to eight different families in the Denver community.

Visit the website at www.milehighleapsandbounds.org for more information or to make a donation.