



PSCH Family Bonds Camp Helps Youth and their Families Build Better Relationships

For families with children who have emotional, social, and behavioral challenges, every day brings its own unique obstacles and quests for answers. Will the day go smoothly or be one filled with turmoil? Many parents are consumed with managing the needs of a special needs child and are unable to experience what most families look forward to – a warm, shared time they will later recall with good thoughts and fond memories.

Camp Provides Families with Respite and Support

This premise was the stimulus for the creation of the Family Bonds Camp. Now in its eighth year, the Camp provides 13 Long Island families a three-day summer camp experience, hosted by PSCH, a well-known health and human services agency serving Long Island and New York City.

For Sharon, 16, Family Bonds Camp provided an opportunity to **“relax, take a break from reality, and understand what it takes to be a family.”** She attended the camp with her mother, and sister. Together, they participated in a series of structured and “free time” exercises designed to open channels of communication and network with other families.

Another participant, Katherine, 17, was joined by her mother and younger brother. She said the program **“helped me talk about my emotions, be who I am, and get a support system that shows how important family is.”**

Shared Experiences Build New Friendships

The annual event is held at Quinipet Camp on Shelter Island, a picturesque setting that encourages participating families to strengthen their bonds, improve their communication skills, and begin new friendships with other families who face similar challenges. Each year is themed. This one focused on a Pirate’s Quest with a *treasure hunt for a good life*. Activities included walks, games, painting and a bonfire where all could share the day’s events.

Youth with mental health challenges often have difficulty creating and maintaining relationships with peers. The camp offers exceptional opportunities for participants to experience life-changing events. According to Ryan Logan, Division Director of PSCH’s Family Services, **“The retreat is often the beginning of what PSCH intends to be a long-term support network that will assist family members on their journey to well-being.”**

During the weekend, families receive support from PSCH staff, who guide them through formal and informal exercises, recreational activities, and other group encounters. **“For many families, this weekend is often their very first ‘family vacation’, and can be a transformational experience,”** said Logan.

Since 1980, PSCH has assisted more than one million individuals and families. With headquarters in Queens, NY and Long Island PSCH is one of the region’s largest and diversified voluntary, not-for-profit health and human services organizations. It maintains an extensive network of mental health, family, developmental disabilities, rehabilitation, substance abuse, vocational training, youth, residential, community education and health awareness services that reach more than 25,500 people each year.

If you need help please call PSCH for a free consultation: **631.920.8302**

The Family Bonds Camp is a joint program of PSCH, Long Island Families Together and Family Service League. ■