

Dodge Camp Discovery



Have you ever surprised yourself by doing something you never thought you could? Day one at the third annual Dodge Camp Discovery was like that for many of the women as they ascended a climbing wall using only upper body strength and then careening down the zip line, which for the participants was somewhere between exhilaration and a white knuckled terror-fest. But each woman completed the challenge and became hooked on possibility. After that feat, it seemed the internal question for many went from "can I do this?" to "I can do this, and so much more!"

from the participants and staff at Camp Discovery— a heartfelt Thank You

The event began on Thursday, August 18th at the Rocky Mountain Village, just outside Empire, Colo. There were several advantages to this site over the previous years of Camp Discovery. Most notably was that all activities, lodging and meals were located inside the campus of the RMV, so that participants were able to get around



easily, go back and forth as they desired and take advantage of a wide variety of activities. Secondly, since the RMV is owned and operated by the Easter Seals organization, accessible activities and facilities are a given. To find a location, especially an outdoorsy mountain location that's fully accessible is not entirely simple, but the RMV made this an experience to remember for these women who are full-time wheelchair users and who don't always find their surroundings to be easy to navigate and wheelchair friendly. The third thing that made this such an incredible experience is that all of the women stayed in the same lodge, giving them ample time to hang out in the common area, get to know each other, make friends and build support systems. And that is the fundamental goal of Camp Discovery—meeting other women who have had like experiences and to be able to learn, share and connect with each other.

Seventeen women participated in 2011 (up from ten in 2010) due to the generous support of Dodge, the Challenged Athletes Foundation, The Pioneer Fund, Craig Hospital, 180 Medical, The Melting Pot, and a wide variety of silent auction donors for our fundraising event.

The weekend opened at dinner on Thursday with a group meal in the dining hall at the RMV and a speaker—The Chocolate Therapist—who gave a hands-on and scrumptious lecture about pairing chocolate and tea. And with that, camp began and it was full of activities to help the participants learn new fitness activities, push themselves physically and to appreciate their talents, while raising self-esteem and creating a healthy body image. Along with rock climbing, the women were offered opportunities to learn scuba diving—with full gear and instruction in the camp swimming pool, tennis, yoga, horseback riding, strength-building exercises, handcycling,



swimming and got plenty of exercise navigating the grounds at the RMV.

To say that the weekend was a success, would be an understatement. Here is what participants said about their time at Dodge Camp Discovery:

- ❖ *My experience at Camp Discovery was awesome and definitely a blessing. It took me out of my element. I also made a lot of new friends and I hope to do it again next year.*
- ❖ *Camp this year was once again a growing experience! I loved that it was all accessible and gave me the chance to do things I haven't done since my injury.*
- ❖ *Without this camp there are many activities I would have never tried, never or had the confidence to try. I didn't believe in myself, that I might be capable of doing anything because of a spinal cord injury and being paralyzed from my waist down. The camp offers opportunities in a very safe environment. No fears. Just women, and plenty of excitement and rewards for personal accomplishments.*



❖ *Before going to this camp I was very depressed and knew nothing about all the different activities that I can still participate in. But now since Camp Discovery I have realized that I am able to do anything I want too and am so grateful to have had the opportunity to participate and create long lasting friendships!*

The program is truly taking off and after three solid years of planning, promotion and growth, the Dodge Camp Discovery is strong and steady and the organizing committee is already preparing for year number four!

Thank you so much for your contribution which has helped us take this event from a mere vision to fruition. This camp is unique in its population, programming and goals and it's evident from the growing number of participants and the interest it

has gained, that it is productive, appreciated and has a permanent place in the hearts of those who take part.

