



**Contact: Anysa Holder**

Director of Marketing, Easter Seals NJ

Phone: (732)955-8376

E-mail: aholder@nj.easterseals.com

**For Immediate Release:**

July 28, 2014

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Easter Seals New Jersey celebrates 60 summers of Camp Merry Heart recreation services for people living with disabilities by honoring corporate sponsors who help make it possible**



**Photo caption:**

**Photo caption:** Camper Amanda enjoys Fourth of July festivities

**Hackettstown, NJ** – For 60 years, Easter Seals Camp Merry Heart has provided meaningful and inclusive recreation experiences to children and adults living with disabilities and difficult life circumstances, due largely in part to the many corporate partners who provide sponsorship. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the disability services agency will say “thank you” to those sponsors at the 123-acre facility in Hackettstown that offers year-round programs in a beautiful and safe setting.

One of few camps in the tri-state area catering to campers of various ability levels, the Camp has served well over 30,000 campers since operations began some six decades ago. With an “ability over disability” approach, the camp encourages people of all ages with special needs to take on safe yet challenging feats while enjoying the outdoors. Recreational services include canoeing, obstacle courses, hiking trails, arts and crafts, fields, courts and pools. While the overnight camp provides week-long opportunities for physical exercise and socialization not readily available elsewhere, it also offers fun weekend excursions and out-of-state recreational trips that supply much-needed respite for family caregivers.

Corporate sponsors honored and expected to attend Corporate Partner day include Century 21, Friendly’s, CVS Pharmacy and Amway who each have respectively contributed millions of dollars to Easter Seals over the years. This year, Friendly’s will bring gallons of non-allergen ice cream for campers to enjoy. The event promises to be a great opportunity for corporate sponsors to meet campers like Amanda and Rebeccah who continue to benefit from their generous contributions.



**Contact: Anysa Holder**

Director of Marketing, Easter Seals NJ

Phone: (732)955-8376

E-mail: aholder@nj.easterseals.com

One faithful camper, Amanda, a young New Jersey native living with special needs, has been attending Camp Merry Heart summer sessions and travel excursions since 2007. "Amanda loves anything at Camp Merry Heart, whether it is staying on site in the cabins or jaunting off to another part of the state," said Amanda's mom. "The minute she knows that she is going to camp, she brings out her suitcases and begins to pack!"

As a new camper, Rebeccah, a young New Jersey native living with special needs, attended her first trip with the Easter Seals Camp Merry Heart Travel Respite program in December when she visited Disney with them. "Rebeccah has a wonderful personality, loves talking to everyone, and is very eager to try new things and go to new places," said Camp Director, Todd Thompson. "On this trip, she particularly enjoyed visiting Animal Kingdom, Sea World and meeting new friends! She liked all the staff and especially having a sense of independence. In fact, she had such a great time that she's already signed up and can't wait to go to Williamsburg with us this summer."

"We look forward to this day and encourage sponsors to participate to see first-hand where their dollars go," said Easter Seals New Jersey Chief Executive Officer, Brian Fitzgerald. "This is a wonderful opportunity for corporate sponsors to connect with campers, take photos, and witness how much of an impact their contribution has made to the Easter Seals mission and specifically Camp Merry Heart." Campers and staff conduct onsite tours for the sponsors, facilitate obstacle courses and partake in a group lunch.

Following Corporate Sponsors day will be Service Club Day on August 6<sup>th</sup>, a carnival-style event sponsored by the local Rotary clubs. The purpose of the event is to give thanks specifically to the Rotary clubs for their tireless support over the years. The carnival will begin at 3pm followed by a ceremony of gratitude and a BBQ dinner all are sure to enjoy.

### **About Easter Seals New Jersey**

Easter Seals New Jersey has helped individuals and families with disabilities or special needs to live, learn, work and play in their communities with equality, dignity and independence since 1948. Annually, over 7,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities including autism, physical disabilities, mental illness and other special needs receive services in our programs designed to help them work toward achieving independence and full community-integration. For more information on Easter Seals New Jersey and its statewide disability services, please contact 732-257-6662 or visit [www.eastersealsnj.org](http://www.eastersealsnj.org) or [www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj](https://www.facebook.com/eastersealsnj).

###