## Building Skills, Gaining Confidence, Adventuring CHADD Sends Four to

by Sarah Schneider-Firestone

"REALLY AWESOME!" are the words fifteen-year-old Daniel Garitano used to describe his initial thoughts after learning that he had been selected as a recipient of this year's CHADD Summer Camp Award. Through a generous grant from McNeil Pediatrics, CHADD has given a summer camp experience to four children living with the everyday challenges of AD/HD. This year's awardees are Donald Bryan, Daniel Garitano, Sophie Hoffman, and Nicole Mensing. Each has received an award of up to \$8,000 to cover the costs associated with attending a camp specializing in meeting the distinctive needs of children coping with attention disorders.

SOPHIE HOFFMAN, 9, cheered when she found out that she had been selected to receive a CHADD Summer Camp Award. Phyllis Hoffman, Sophie's mother, explains, "Sophie knew she couldn't go to camp this year without the scholarship. She is just so excited to be going to camp!" A delight to interview, Sophie described her various interests, which include watching American Idol, playing games on her Wii, kickball, soccer, swimming,

games on her Wil, Received playing Mancala, and Irish step dancing. Sophie's goal for camp this year is to receive the High Point Kid award and to be on the camp honor roll. Hoffman explains that the camp Sophie will be attending gives out daily awards to campers and provides parents with daily report cards on their child's behavior. The

awards are a reflection of the child's daily progress, efforts

and accomplishments in areas such as Kindest, Best Swimmer, Best Friend, and Good Sport, just to name a few. Sophie adds, "If you don't get a daily award, you just get over it," and focus on getting an award the next day.

Hoffman describes the camp Sophie will be attending as "a wonderful environment that cheers the campers on and offers them encouragement, support, and skills training." Kids

AD/HD "don't get recognized very often for doing the right thing." Sophie "just wants recognition like other people get, and she doesn't often get it, she just gets shot down." Her mother feels that camp offers Sophie the opportunity to be like other kids in a positive constructive environment with camp counselors who treat campers respectfully and model responsible behavior—and really, that's all

any parent who is sending their child to summer camp can ask for. Sophie and her mother Phyllis live in Long Beach, New York.





## Abroad, Experiencing Natural Wonders—and Academics: Summer Camp in 2008

DONALD BRYAN, 10, says that he is most looking forward to making new friends, bonfires, and roasting marshmallows at camp this

summer. He is also really hoping that there will be a rock climbing wall at camp. Donald has an independent streak and is looking forward to flying to camp on his own. An

avid baseball fan, Donald's favorite team is

the Cleveland Indians. Donald also enjoys reading Harry Potter books, playing paintball and videogames, and watching movies. When asked, Donald says that school "is not the best ever," citing that his AD/HD makes it "hard to pay attention." Cornelia Bryan, Donald's mother, hopes that

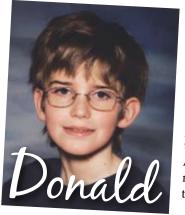
his camp experience will allow him to become "more comfortable with himself, build better relationships, [and attain] more self-confidence" to help him better manage his AD/HD in school and in daily activities.

Bryan is very appreciative of this op-

portunity for Donald. She says that she found herself crying at times when filling out the application. The whole application process was such an emotional experience for her since she had to recall all of

Donald's

many challenges. Her emotions changed to astonishment followed by gratitude when she found out that Donald had won, she says, adding that "there is no way that he would have an opportunity like this without the award. " Donald lives in Austintown, Ohio, with his mother, younger brother, and their cat, Abbey.

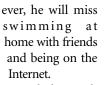




**DANIEL GARITANO**, 15, will not only be attending camp this year as a camper but will also be a junior leader at his camp of choice. Since Daniel will be returning to a camp that he previously attended and is familiar with, there was an opportunity for him to assist the counselors by helping to lead other campers. Daniel says that this will give him "more opportunity to help as a leader. It will be harder work, but it's worth it." Donald is also

very much looking forward to camp activities such as water rafting, canoeing, and hiking. Daniel adds that while away at camp, how-





Although
Daniel may long
for the comforts
of home while
away at camp,
his godmother,
Cindy Tusler, says that she

has noticed an improvement in Daniel's academic abilities since he started going to camp. Camp "helps to continue his growth with school," she says. Tusler attributes Daniel's academic growth over the last few years to his camp experiences, which consists of a half-day of academics followed by "fun stuff." Tusler describes the camp environment as one that "creates a successful, safe environment for him to thrive in." Daniel comes back from camp more verbal, she says, an area identified by the school as needing work—and last

aniel



year his teachers noted his improvement.

Daniel adds he is hoping that camp will help him to continue to work on the daily frustrations he has with his AD/HD, such as "not getting so angry so fast." Whatever Daniel hopes to accomplish at camp, his godmother says that "Daniel is super proud, [and] feels really special about being selected as an award recipient." Daniel adds, "Thanks for the \$8,000 [toward camp costs]. I really appreciate it!" Daniel lives with his godparents in White River, South Dakota.

**NICOLE MENSING,** 14, says she feels fortunate to have "good friends and a good life." Well, imagine how much more fortunate she felt when she discovered that she had been selected as a summer camp award recipient! Nicole describes finding out that she had been selected as surprising, adding that the surprise "was a good one!" A typical teenager,



Nicole's interests include reading and writing poetry and learning new things. Nicole's mother Julia Mensing, reports that Nicole is looking forward to visiting the country of Belize, a place Nicole has never visited and

the destination of one of the summer camp sessions she will be attending this summer. Nicole is excited to have an opportunity to experience all of the indigenous species and natural wonders of Belize, Mensing says. Nicole has never been away from home before, and Mensing feels that this is an incredible opportunity for her.

Equally important as Nicole's chance to experience new cultures is the academic component of the camp she chose to attend. Mensing feels that "since AD/HD is not a visible impairment, these kids need extra care and accommodations to ensure their success so they don't fall behind." Since Nicole will be beginning high school in a new school in the fall, Mensing sees the academic component as a way to help Nicole transition to high school by helping to solidify her academic skills.

When asked what she hopes to get out of attending camp this summer, Nicole

cites "better social skills [and] improving my academics." Mensing adds that she hopes this experience will reinforce for Nicole that she has the ability to succeed in the real world. Often society is quick to judge and label these kids, Mensing says, without giving them a fair chance to see what

they are really capable of doing. She hopes the camp will instill confidence in them so "they know they can do this." This camp will be an excellent opportunity for her to "work on social issues" and learn to adapt to different situations. "Camp will help Nicole to become a better person in the real world," Mensing says, adding that such camp experiences help these kids "go on to be better people, better adults, and helps them go off into the real world." Nicole lives in San Carlos, California, with her mother and two dogs. •



## **Congratulations to all of CHADD's Summer Camp awardees!**

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