



Newsletter

2015

December 2015

Hi Everyone,

As another year closes, it is hard to believe that Kris' Camp has been serving families for 21 years. Here's to 22! This year we had an adult camp in San Diego, and our two weeks in Idyllwild. Families came from California, Pennsylvania, Washington State, and even Japan. We had a couple of new staff members, and I loved sharing the work we have been doing at Kris' camp. It is such a pleasure for me to see light bulbs going off in folks' brains when we speak about our work.

An example: Have you ever wondered why people with autism often don't reach out for a hug? One misconception people have is that it is because there is no desire to give a hug. But, if you take a closer look at what we know now about different brain connections and motor learning styles of people with autism, you see that their visuomotor system is not well connected. The visuomotor pathway is what we rely on in 'real time,' and in fact they don't have efficient access to this pathway (we know from motor learning studies). I often explain it that when you are playing a game of tennis, you have an internal motor memory of how to hit a tennis ball with a racquet. That is your internal motor memory. Alternatively, as you are playing a game of tennis, you will need to adjust where the ball goes or you would quickly lose! Adjusting your body quickly in terms of what you see visually is the visuomotor system.

So, back to hugging someone. Persons with a typical nervous system can see someone they know and love, and quickly adjust their body and posture to reach forward and give a hug. Persons with autism can't. It isn't that they don't want to, or can't - it is that they don't have an efficiently organized visuomotor system. Isn't it funny how we interpret so much on what we can see from the outside? So, go ahead and hug them, because it's not that they don't want it, they just can't initiate it!

We continue to move forward with research, and began a study using electromyography (*EMG*) data to examine the reaching movement with communication on a keyboard. I am in the process of reworking the study, based on what we found and kinks we need to work out, but the plan is to start collecting more data when I am in Arizona this coming spring for camp. Stay tuned!

On a personal note, Kev has moved to Nashville with her hubby, Luke, and their animals. She anticipates graduating this spring and is in the planning stages of writing a grant for a school she wants to start. Luke is working at a Guitar store that makes custom guitars, and is loving learning a lot about making custom guitars. Chelsea and I will join them in their new home this Christmas.

Chelsea finished her yoga teacher training this fall and now teaches a couple of yoga classes. I have been to her more 'beginner' class, and if I say so myself she is an awesome instructor! She continues to work at the Zimmerman agency, and has done well with a couple promotions this year! To satisfy her desire to do some good in the world,

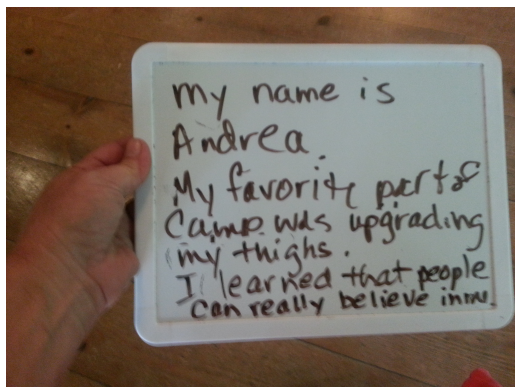
she also volunteers for an NGO that monitors human rights issues. I am very happy to have had the time with her as she remains in Tallahassee. In fact, we started a group project this past September - first fostering and then adopting a Belgian Malinois mix puppy that we named Nelly. It took us trying out several names before agreeing on Nelly. According to "the Google", Nelly is short for Eleanor or Helen, and means "Compassionate" or "High one." We figured we could use a compassionate high one in our animal brood :-). I have taken Nelly to see clients with me at the day program, with the plan of having her pass the therapy dog test. She has proven to be very popular and very comfortable in the setting. In fact, when I arrive at the day program, I often get ignored in folks' exuberant greetings of Nelly.



I continue to see clients and slowly work into doing more training and providing continuing education opportunities based on my graduate work and our work at Kris' Camp. I have done three trainings this year, and am working on more online training opportunities for therapists and educators. Like us on Facebook as I will be posting there when new courses are added to the website and training opportunities are planned as well as updates on camp.

Wishing you all the best of holiday times, and all the best in the New Year!
Thanks so much for your continued support!

Love,
Kathy



Staff reflections on Kris' Camp

*From the classroom,
Emily Holly*

My name is Emily Holly and I am a Special Education Consultant for a public school district, with plans of opening a private day school for students with Autism in the fall of 2016.

As a high school student, I worked in the special education classrooms as a tutor and was very intrigued and confused by the students with Autism. I attended college, studying and gaining a degree in special education, but my studies did not teach me any information with depth and value in regards to the neurologic disorder, developmental disability of Autism.

The opportunity to be the Special Educator for Kris' Camp came after my first year of teaching. The experience of that camp, and every Kris' Camp I have participated in following that first summer, has been eye opening, inspiring, and priceless. The philosophy of approaching students with autism by focusing on communication and sensory supports and truly presuming competence of the individuals has guided my philosophy and teaching methods for the individuals I work with on a daily basis. Kathy, the staff, and the campers have inspired me to examine the layers and see the potential and capabilities of a person. I have learned the importance of strategically and purposefully supporting individuals to be independent; not to enable a person, but to inspire them. The school opening in fall 2016, in Cottonwood Arizona, is inspired by Kris' Camp and will follow that open minded; yet research based philosophy and approach for all students. Many tools and information I have gained from my experiences at Kris' Camp are implemented into all of the work that I do with students, and I am looking forward to being a part of the Kris' Camp team to be inspired again and again.



*And from the lab bench,
Robin Shafer*

I started working as an assistant at Kris' Camp in 2008, and I have worked every summer since then. When I started working camp, I had just finished my sophomore year of high school, and while I didn't have a clue what I wanted study in college or what I wanted to do when I grew up, I knew that I loved science, biology in particular. My experience working at Kris' Camp was the first time that I had been introduced to people with ASD. I learned so much in that very first summer from the wonderful group of campers, families, and staff that I had the opportunity to work with. I feel very fortunate that my first experience working with people with autism (ASD) was in such a supportive environment. I was able to learn the neuroscience underlying the symptoms of autism, and the rationale for the therapy approaches we take at camp, but I was also able to see how they were applied and how we were able to use the science to help the campers be more in control of their bodies, more communicative, and more confident in themselves, as well as helping to provide the families with resources and tools so that they could continue to build on the progress that their children made at camp.

It bothered me to know that many people don't view people with ASD the same way that we do at camp, and I felt that it was largely due to the fact that, as a society, we really don't understand what is happening in the brain of people with ASD. I wanted to develop a better understanding of the neurobiology of ASD as well. I graduated from high school in spring of 2010 and started my undergraduate studies at the University of Florida that fall. I chose to pursue a bachelor's degree in Neuroscience. I joined Dr. Mark Lewis' research lab where I studied the neurobiology of repetitive

behavior in mice. Our mice had stereotyped jumping and back-flipping that was associated with reduced metabolic activity in the indirect basal ganglia pathway (the "breaks" for the fronto-striatal loops that Kathy talks about all the time). My project in the lab was to determine if the mice also had cognitive forms of repetitive behaviors akin to the "resistance to change" behaviors associated with ASD, and as it turns out, they do, which further supports the research in ASD that these fronto-striatal loops are extra strong in people with ASD and they contribute to many forms of repetitive behavior.

I graduated from UF in the spring of 2014, and I began my graduate studies in the Neuroscience PhD program at Vanderbilt University that fall. I currently conduct research in Dr. Jim Bodfish's lab at Vanderbilt. Our lab is particularly interested in visual attention in individuals with ASD and what drives attention toward objects associated



with circumscribed interests or away from social images. For my dissertation, I will be focusing on sensorimotor differences in individuals with ASD in order to better understand why it is difficult for individuals with ASD to control their bodies. Hopefully, with the knowledge I gain from my research, I will be able to contribute to the development of therapy techniques and assistive technologies that will allow individuals with ASD to be more independent and to be their true selves. I also hope that my research will help increase community awareness of ASD and educate people about what it is like to have ASD.



And, some notes from campers!
My favorite part of camp was...

Max...

I am so very happy to be here. I can be
me here. Crazy to be accepted. I love it here!
You are all my friends. I can't wait for next camp

Nathan...

"I am a smart autistic. My name is Nathan. I am cool. Me I am quite happy at camp. Just everything is my favorite. Trying to be me is good work. Fun to be here so fun."



Sam...

This week, I did practice dating.
We went to the coffee shop. We
talked about ourselves. It was like
fun. I also did obstacle course.
I learned about a dog named Balto.
My favorite part of camp is doing an
obstacle course.

Thank you,
Sam Scearce

Miguel...

My name is Miguel
and I am smart.
My favorite things about
Kris' Camp are music,
learning new things,
& getting the support I
need

Something new I learned
was playing a new instrument
and trusting my body

And, Julian...

"My name is Julian. At camp I learned to trust myself. My favorite thing at camp was playing games, making friends, and music. Thank you for making camp possible!"



2015 Financial Information

Revenues

Donations	\$12,054
Tuition Fees:	\$17,100

Total Revenues	\$29,154
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Expenses

Filings	\$40
Administration stipend	\$4,000
Therapist stipend	\$14,490
Supplies and Food	\$2,947
Tea/Newsletter	\$646
Insurance	\$2,697

Total Expenses	\$29,053
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Net	\$101
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2015 Program Calendar

Please check our website at <http://www.kriscamp.org/calendar/index.html> for updates in the New Year.

Session	Date	Location
5-day Mixed Ages Therapy Program	March 14-18	Cottonwood, AZ
5-day Mixed Ages Therapy Program	June 18-22	Idyllwild, CA
3-day Mixed Ages Therapy Program	June 25-28	Idyllwild, CA
5-day Mixed Ages Therapy Program	July	Tennessee or Florida *

* Currently investigating possible venues



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