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Camp Imua Offers Volunteers Remarkable Experience

Wailuku, Maui - Shaun Malkovich, 15, describes his experience as a volunteer at Camp Imua as one of the most meaningful moments in his young life. Seventeen year old volunteer Haven Miller agrees, calling the experience of providing a week of one-on-one care for a differently-abled child "one of the most remarkable experiences I have ever had."

Camp Imua, a week-long recreational camp for children with special needs and disabilities, is hosted each year by Imua Family Services. This year, Camp Imua is scheduled for June 7-13 at Camp Maluhia in the West Maui mountains.

At Camp Imua, 50 children with a wide range of disabilities including autism, downs syndrome, multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy enjoy programs that promote friendships, confidence and life skills. The week is provided free of charge to children and their families and occurs thanks to the generosity of hundreds of Maui citizens and businesses who donate the food, activities, money, time and talent necessary to make Camp Imua a reality year after year. This year Camp Imua celebrates its 32nd consecutive year.

"Everyone involved with Camp Imua says they receive more than they give," said Tracy Kealoha, Program Director for Camp Imua. "Volunteers at Camp Imua become more compassionate and thoughtful people through their experience." According to Kealoha, "the transformation of the youth volunteers is most amazing."

Peter Meyer, 17, volunteered for the first time at last year's Camp Imua and recently shared his experience with his peers in a speech at Seabury Hall. Peter had provided care for a fourteen year old camper, Troyden, who is blind and autistic. Peter helped Troyden perform daily activities and also encouraged him to relax and have fun in new surroundings. At first, Troyden's inability to communicate was a challenge for Peter, but he soon tuned into useful strategies for Troyden's care. By volunteering at Camp Imua, Peter gained new levels of patience and understanding and learned to appreciate the world in new ways.



"Troyden helped me to see my life and health in an entirely new light," Meyer stated. "And I carry with me the lessons I learned from him to this day."

Imua Family Services is still seeking volunteers for this year's Camp Imua. To obtain a volunteer application, visit www.campimua.org or call 244-7467x258 for more information.

Photo: Troyden Freitas catches a piggy-back ride from volunteer, Peter Meyer at last year's Camp Imua. Volunteer opportunities are still available for this year's Camp scheduled for June 7-13.