

MEDIA RELEASE



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USA camp experience wows Aussie disability worker

Hiking, camping and playing games does not sound like work although that is exactly what Lachlan Olm, 27, has been doing for the past three months.

The Toowoomba disability support worker has recently returned from the United States where he worked at a highly regarded summer camp for young people with learning differences.

Talisman Camp is located in North Carolina and provides an outdoor adventure program for people aged 6 to 22 with autism spectrum disorders, ADHD and Aspergers.

Lachlan was sponsored by his Toowoomba employer, not-for-profit organisation YellowBridge QLD, and was the only Australian amongst the 60 summer camp staff.

“It was an awesome experience,” he said.

“The camp itself is located in the mountains so everywhere you look the scenery is just amazing.”

“We went on long hikes and camped under waterfalls – everything about it was incredible.”

Each year the camp caters for about 300 young people who are grouped by age and diagnosis and participate in specially designed programs.

“There is a strong emphasis on activities that are outdoors, technology-free and interactive. We would play games and music for hours without any fancy equipment or technology,” he said.

“The camp made me realise how reliant we can be sometimes on using equipment and technology. It was so eye-opening and now I have lots of ideas for activities that don’t need these.”

Lachlan said the two-week intensive training course he completed at the beginning of camp was one of the most valuable experiences in his career.

“The training was unbelievable. We listened to disability experts, learnt wilderness first aid and CPR and received training on managing a wide variety of behaviours,” he said.

“I felt that the training and experience I have received at YellowBridge prepared me well for working at the camp.”

Lachlan would love to return to the camp next year and hopefully bring some more Australians with him.

“The camp organisers are impressed with the standard of disability training in Australia and are keen for more Aussies to spend a season at the camp,” he said.

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YellowBridge QLD is a local, independent, not-for-profit organisation that provides housing, disability support and home services across the Darling Downs.