



# COASTAL CONNECTIONS

AN UPDATE FROM CAMP ARANZAZU

SEPTEMBER 2021

## CAMP'S IN SESSION!

**G**reetings from Camp Aranzazu! Once again, we have much exciting news to share with you in this edition of Coastal Connections.

First and foremost, we were so honored to welcome some 475 campers back to Camp this summer. Our extensive hygiene protocols effectively protected both campers and staff from COVID. We had a full summer of expanded sailing activities in addition to all our traditional pre-pandemic activities. We are deeply appreciative of the 15 young adults from across the country who came this summer to work at the Camp and to love on our campers.

Second, thank you to everyone who has given so generously to the Camp over the past year and a half. Giving has held up strongly despite the pandemic. We would not be able to support so many youth and adults with special needs without your sustained, bountiful support. Please consider attending and supporting one or more of our **five** events happening over the next nine months.

Finally, the board is pleased to announce that we have hired Kurt Podeszwa as Camp Aranzazu's third president. Kurt comes to us from Camp For All in Burton, Texas, where he served for 16 years as the camp director. Kurt is well known and highly regarded in the national camping community, and he has a loving heart for serving youth and adults with special needs. We will introduce Kurt more fully in the coming weeks.

Best Wishes,

*Keith Little*

Keith Little, Board Chair



## CAMP RECEIVES TRANSFORMATIONAL MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY

**W**e kicked off the *Camp Aranzazu Resiliency Fund Campaign* in May and are making significant strides toward reaching our goal to raise \$2.5 million in gifts and pledges by December 2022, which will enable the Camp to receive a \$2.5 million matching gift from a very generous longtime supporter. Our ultimate goal is to raise a total of \$10 million by December 2024.

The *Resiliency Fund* is a permanent endowment that the Board created to help ensure that Camp Aranzazu will be here to support children and adults with special needs and chronic illnesses for generations to come. When fully funded, the endowment will generate a stable and predictable source of funds to help maintain our 104-acre, 175-bed facility, which is continuously impacted by our beautiful coastal location. As we work to significantly increase utilization and to benefit the lives of more campers, the *Resiliency Fund* also will help us ensure that we can continue to underwrite much of the cost of camp, so that financial barriers do not prevent a child or young adult from attending camp.

Says the Camp's founder, Tom Forney,

**"Holly and I gave our gift because we believe that the amazing Blessings the camp has given so many, not the least of which is us, are something we want to see continue."**

I know we all share the Forneys' desire to see the Camp continue to be a unique and much needed source of support for children and adults with special needs and chronic illnesses. Special populations have suffered more than their share during the pandemic.

As of August 26, 2021, we have raised \$1,863,950. Of that amount, \$863,950 qualifies for the match. We also have almost \$2 million in pending proposals.

Your gift – regardless of the size – is important. Participation is what matters. Both gifts and pledges received (up to five years from December 2022) will count toward the matching gift challenge! For more information, visit [www.camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund](http://www.camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund) or email Virginia Ballard at [vballard@camparanzazu.org](mailto:vballard@camparanzazu.org).

With gratitude,

*Bobby Hatcher*



Bobby Hatcher  
Treasurer, Camp Aranzazu Board of Directors  
Chairman, Camp Aranzazu Resiliency Fund

## RESILIENCY FUND DONORS\*

### Anonymous

Holly and Tom Forney  
Strickland Family Foundation  
Joanne Taylor  
The Watson Family

Jennifer and Fields Alexander  
Wayne Duddleston Foundation  
Guill Family Foundation  
Denise and Charles Hazen  
Katherine and Bobby Hatcher  
Julie and Keith Little

Deborah Chapman  
Annie and Casey Cullen  
Philip Edmundson  
Blake and Perry Finger  
Allegra and Hunter Hawkins  
Nicole and Rob McClane  
Royston Patterson  
Amanda and Bryan Phillips  
Amanda Praet  
Ferdinand and Susanne Vollmer



\*Donors as of 8/26/2021

# ARANZAZU CAMPUS NEWS

Mandy Hood, *Facilities Director*

This past spring was busy with the annual preparations for summer camp. However, this year we faced unusual challenges: lingering projects following past tropical storms, the ongoing pandemic, and an extraordinary rainfall event.

In late spring, we installed several new shade structures around the challenge course to provide shade for campers following the loss of close to 50% of our oaks during Hurricane Harvey. We also installed a new floating dock at our bayfront to ensure that our campers could safely and easily board the Camp's adaptive sailboats. The previous dock did not last through the 2020 tropical storms that hit the Coastal Bend.

During this same time, we installed UV lights in the cabins' air-conditioning units as one of our layered COVID-19 interventions.

Finally, I am pleased to share that our facilities fared well during July's flooding. While no buildings took on water, we did experience septic issues due to the saturated water table. Our gracious vendor worked overtime to ensure that the system was fixed quickly so as not to inconvenience our campers.



With 104 acres and 32 buildings and structures to oversee, maintenance continues to challenge Camp Aranzazu's two-person facilities team. I am grateful for the donors who recognize that facilities projects and the *Camp Aranzazu Resiliency Fund* are essential to providing a safe, impactful recreational experience for the children and young adults who spend time at Camp Aranzazu.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Hunter Hawkins has served on Camp Aranzazu's Board of Directors since 2019. He brings to the Camp his expertise in business and building relationships as the Vice President for Property & Casualty at Marsh USA Inc. Hunter and his wife, Allegra, were first introduced to Camp by serving on the host committee for San Antonio's inaugural *Holiday Bells & Shells* in 2018. The couple then co-chaired the event in 2019.



When asked why he continues volunteering with and supporting Camp Aranzazu, Hunter says that he simply believes in the mission: "I grew up on a summer camp in the Hill Country that my family has owned and operated since the 1970s. I am a huge believer in the power of camp. I love that Camp Aranzazu has built a solid foundation to share that transformational power with those who might not be able to experience it otherwise."

Hunter and Allegra currently enjoy settling into life as a new family of four with their two sons, Johnny and Scotty. And just like many of us, they're soaking up the sun and spending time outdoors in some of their favorite coastal places close to home.

Thank you, Hunter, for your family's support of our team and your strong belief in bringing the joy of camp to as many people as possible!

**Interested in volunteering?**  
**We have in-person and at-home opportunities! Contact Bianca Hernandez, development associate, at [bianca@camparanzazu.org](mailto:bianca@camparanzazu.org).**



## Activity Leader SPOTLIGHT

### ANGEL ALCALA

Veteran activity leader, Angel Alcala, just finished his third summer working at Camp Aranzazu. Before starting his Doctorate of Occupational Therapy this fall at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Angel says he wanted to spend his last free summer giving back and having fun at the place where his passion for caring for special populations began.

Angel came to Camp Aranzazu in 2017 as a volunteer with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). He admits that he was young and naïve, coming to camp for somewhat selfish reasons: "I thought to myself, '[MDA] needs male volunteers, I have nothing planned this summer, I have never been to an overnight camp, and it's free as a volunteer - perfect!'"

Instead, Angel relished being part of Camp Aranzazu's family environment and working with special populations. He returned the following summer to volunteer with multiple partners like the Epilepsy Foundation of Central & South Texas, MDA, and Driscoll Children's Hospital. For him, it was an easy decision in early 2019 to commit to joining Camp Aranzazu's staff for the whole summer.

As a returning activity leader, Angel's favorite part of work has been watching the change in campers from year to year: "It's really cool to witness campers growing up, conquering their fears, and accomplishing more of their goals than the year before. We get to witness so many personal victories, and I am honored and humbled to be part of these stories."

**If you know someone who would be a good fit to join our staff next summer, visit <https://camparanzazu.org/careers> or email Amanda Praet, assistant camp director, at [amanda@camparanzazu.org](mailto:amanda@camparanzazu.org).**





# BETTER TOGETHER!

Amelia Haslam Smith, *Camp Director*

As I reflect on this summer, I sit in awe of the array of challenges we have faced. Camping during the pandemic pushed us in new and strange ways. But I am so proud of Camp Aranzazu's full-time program staff and summer activity leaders who courageously managed each unique situation this summer.

Our shortened summer season welcomed more than 475 campers from mid-June until early August, and I am elated to share that all of our campers, volunteers, and activity leaders remained healthy! The children and young adults with special needs and chronic illnesses who spent time at Camp Aranzazu this summer sailed on Copano Bay, sang around bayfront campfires, shot archery, frolicked in the "party pool," and petted coastal critters in our Nature Hut. These children and young adults craved normalcy – respite from their

## WHAT A TEAM!

diagnoses and from the past year's isolation. I am humbled and grateful that Camp Aranzazu could fill their summers with joy.

As we look ahead to the fall, I see more uncertainty in light of the widespread delta variant. Some of our partner organizations have chosen to reschedule their weekend camps. Others are changing their camps from overnight to day sessions. While we had been looking forward to a busy fall, we now realize it may be another bumpy road as we collectively navigate the pandemic. One thing is certain, though: we have been here before, and we are eager and prepared to serve our campers no matter how they get to experience camp.



**Thank you for making our programs possible. Your belief in and support of our mission makes miracles happen at Camp Aranzazu.**

## CAMP HELPS JARED NAVIGATE HIS FUTURE



Nonchalantly rocking the chair with an ankle crossed over his knee, Jared looks like any other young adult on summer break from college courses. The 23-year-old Houstonian recently talked with Camp Director Amelia Haslam Smith about adapting to college life.

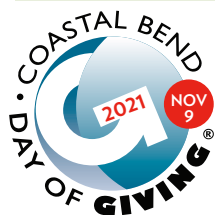
Jared's relaxed demeanor may have seemed like a typical conversation between friends, but he acknowledges that his autism spectrum disorder sometimes makes social interactions awkward and facial recognition difficult. Camp Aranzazu offered Jared the chance to learn and explore while fostering social skills: "Doing fun activities, together – that's the point of camp."

He is grateful that his mom forced him to participate in activities to help him navigate his diagnosis by ensuring he could camp

with us for a decade, during his formative teen years. Jared's experiences at Camp Aranzazu, where programs were intentionally designed for his group to include social interaction, ultimately helped ease his transition from living at home to living independently in a college dorm. Says Jared, "Camp prepared me to do things on my own, during the first big time to not have my mom around."

Since moving away to college, Jared has enjoyed working towards his career goal of becoming a professor. His social successes are as important as his academic success. He comfortably interacts with people he did not know well, and has even found a network of friends with similar hobbies. Jared's confidence shines when he says, "[My diagnosis] is not the end of the world. People do learn to live with autism."

**"People always want to have good places to give. Some of these kids have lots of problems, and Camp Aranzazu is helping them to have something [special]. I think if there is any place you want to invest in, it's Camp Aranzazu."**



## DOUBLE YOUR GIFT ON NOVEMBER 9TH!

Make a gift to Camp Aranzazu on **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2021**, as part of the **COASTAL BEND DAY OF GIVING**, and your contribution will be matched up to \$21,800! In order for us to receive the match, please go to the Coastal Bend Community Foundation website ([www.coastalbenddayofgiving.org](http://www.coastalbenddayofgiving.org)), click on the "Nonprofits" tab, search for Camp Aranzazu, and click "Donate Now." You can give as early as November 1st, and you also can even create a social media campaign to encourage your friends and family to support our campers!





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"I'm stronger than I think I am. Going up the rock wall was really scary, but overcoming that [fear] really helped me. I'll be more brave and more open to new things."

- SARAH, 15



"I really liked the Screamer (rope swing) because I swung upside down like Spiderman."

- RYAN, 13

## SAVE THE DATE!

### ARANZABOO! TOURS & TREATS

October 30, 2021 | Camp Aranzazu

### SAN ANTONIO HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

November 17, 2021 | The Argyle

November 18, 2021 | San Antonio Gun Club

**CHAired BY:** Sarah & Marks Moore and Katherine & John Smelko

#### HOST COMMITTEE:

Drs. Sara McCamish and Edward Briggs	Britt and Cardo Kleberg
April and Richard Carnahan	Kim and Chris Kleberg
Mary and Hunter Conger	Camille and Clark Mandigo
Elizabeth and Chris Dewar	Nicole and Robert McClane
Lauren and Shawn Golden	Muffin Moorman
Dr. Brooks Hagee and Chris Hagee	Mary Beth Mosbacher
Allegra and Hunter Hawkins	Laura and Clay Page
Gretchen and David Herrmann	Angela and Trey Rabke
Elizabeth and Hunter Houston	Jeanne and Kelvin Tatum
Hannah Hudson	Melanie and Dr. Robert Thomas
Nathan Hudson	Tracy and Jack Williams
Kim and Clyde Johnson	Julie and Peter Zacher

### HOUSTON HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

December 7, 2021 | Greater Houston Sports Club

**CHAired BY:** Susan & John Ferrari and the High Brass Social Club\*

#### HOST COMMITTEE:

Jennifer & Fields Alexander	Carol & Scott Neal*
Laura & Kyndel Bennett*	Shannon & Mark Nini
Kim & John Bonner	Courtney & Christian O'Neil*
Jennifer & Chris Church*	Tracie & Terrell Palmer*
Katherine & Bobby Hatcher	Katherine & Brian Parsley
John Manning*	Dee Dee & Steve Robinson
Kelli & Ben Veazey*	

### BATTER UP! AN EVENING WITH CARLOS CORREA

January 27, 2022 | Union Station at Minute Maid Park

**HONORARY CHAIR:** Scott McClelland, HEB President

### 13TH ANNUAL ZAZU BBQ, MUSIC & MORE

May 7, 2022 | Camp Aranzazu

Questions? Contact Kate Plouvier, Development Director, at [kate@camparanzazu.org](mailto:kate@camparanzazu.org).