



COASTAL CONNECTIONS

AN UPDATE FROM CAMP ARANZAZU

OCTOBER 2022

MAX'S *Mission To* SERVE

Once a camper himself, Max jumped at the chance to become a counselor for camping sessions with our partner, the Epilepsy Foundation of Central & South Texas. "I know the struggles of being young and having epilepsy, and I feel like it's my responsibility to share my story and help campers who are going through the same things," says Max.



Max has a mission to help campers be themselves and make new friends!

Max had never met anyone else with epilepsy before coming to Camp Aranzazu. Now, he greets new campers and counselors every summer – all of whom have epilepsy. Says Max, "Every year, we build onto the family that we made from last year." He makes it his mission to help campers make new friends and enjoy being themselves.

Now a college student studying sports management, Max enjoys using his passion for sports to

connect with the older campers in his cabin and join the friendly competition that happens at Camp. He wants campers to believe in themselves and push themselves to try their best in everything they do.

Even as a counselor, Max challenges himself in new ways and accomplishes new goals at Camp Aranzazu.

Max shares, "I feel like I'm just a grown camper with more responsibility." He was even able to make it to the top of the vertical rock wall for the first time this year – an accomplishment of one of his personal longstanding goals! But equally impactful, Max became an example of resilience for the campers who watched him climb to the top.

Having been part of the Camp Aranzazu community for nine years, Max feels the impact of camp every day. Max explains, "I wouldn't be the person I am today without Camp Aranzazu." Until next year, Max!



A LETTER *from our* PRESIDENT

Camp Aranzazu Friends,

Back to school means reconnecting with friends to share about summer vacations, trips to the pool and water parks, and, of course, camp. I was blessed this summer to see campers who are not always able to do those activities enjoy an *amazing* camp experience.

Watching campers sail on Copano Bay was my favorite part of the summer. One camper came up to me after disembarking and told me he got to steer the boat his first time sailing! We agreed that he was a "natural" at sailing. His smile and excitement reflected independence and self-esteem...*that's* the reason we are here.

Another camper shared that his sister is receiving cancer treatment at Driscoll Children's Hospital, so he hasn't seen her in months because their family lives in the Rio Grande Valley. He said camp brings them together and that he was proud of her for challenging herself and trying new things.

These are two of hundreds of stories from this summer at Camp Aranzazu. Our beautiful 105 acres sets the stage for campers to have these unique experiences, but the true catalyst to the amazing camp experience is the staff. Our activity leaders from around the country are trained to run activities safely and to connect each activity to measurable outcomes for our campers.

Thank you for your continued support of Camp Aranzazu. You help make these stories possible! As always, we would love to give you a tour of camp so you can see the magic firsthand, and I hope to see you at one of our events this fall!

Kurt R. Podeszwa
President





"I'm more fearless than I thought I was!"

Sailing... MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE



Traveling to the beach, fishing, birding, and sailing. These are experiences that define summer for many of us, but often are not possible for children and adults with special needs and chronic illnesses. That's where Camp Aranzazu comes in! "Sailing combined with birding and bayfront fishing offers a valuable opportunity for campers to explore our bayfront and learn about the marine environment," says Ted Birmingham, Camp Aranzazu sailing supervisor.

After more than 30 hours of intensive training in May, our activity leaders turned skippers were ready to set sail for our summer camping season. The time spent with campers in our accessible sailboats offers the opportunity to

connect one-on-one, listen to the camper's stories, and teach a little sailing while out on the bay.

Many campers sail for the first time at Camp Aranzazu! This gives campers the chance to "learn about the bayfront in a stress-free and very personalized way," shares Ted. "Campers can expect to have a great time while out sailing in Copano Bay and, though it isn't a guarantee, I'd guess there's a 50/50 chance of seeing a dolphin while they're on the water."

The sailing program began in 2018 with the donation of sailboats from CC Sail Away, and each year our team finds ways to improve the bayfront experience at Camp Aranzazu. This

year, we added a 12-person trolley to transport campers over the bridge. The trolley allows campers to maximize their time at the bayfront. Facilities director, Mandy Hood says, "Our facilities team loves giving the campers rides to the bayfront and watching their excitement for sailing and other bayfront activities. We're grateful to the Fulton Fire Department for helping to make this purchase possible!"

You can follow along on other improvements to our bayfront and expansion of our sailing program by following Camp Aranzazu on Facebook.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Dustin Schroeder, a shift superintendent with Valero Energy Bill Greehey Refineries, leads a collaborative volunteer effort in support of Camp Aranzazu's facilities and mission. He first learned about Camp by his colleague's involvement in a prior volunteer project. In fact, Valero Energy has been a long-time friend of Camp Aranzazu having supported our mission since 2005.

When asked what Dustin thought about Camp Aranzazu after his first visit, he replied, "You never know what to expect— if it's all it's cracked up to be. It definitely is! Camp's environment caters to individuals' special needs. The staff are friendly and easy to work with. I see a lot of hands-on, and I see a 'family' of staff working together there. It's an awesome place." It was Dustin's first visit that inspired him to advocate for Valero to support Camp and our upcoming Aranza-BOO event,

October 29, which is a free afternoon of Halloween-themed fun for the community at Camp Aranzazu.

Dustin describes his volunteer experience at camp as a personal opportunity: "I have a daughter with special needs. When I visit camp, I can see on a personal level, what my daughter's future looks like, and know that she will be able to attend camp. I believe in Camp Aranzazu's ultimate goal of providing life experiences for kids who may not otherwise be able to participate. I want to be a part of that, and I'm able to contribute to Camp because of the support of my company, wife, and kids. It's a team effort."

Thank you, Dustin, for your family's dedication to Camp! Your efforts help us provide amazing experiences for all campers, no matter the need!





"I can be myself at Camp Aranzazu!"

PARTNER *Spotlight*

Sindi Rosales is a woman of action. When her daughter, Jessica, underwent a hemispherectomy at the age of 11 due to a sudden diagnosis of Rasmussen's Encephalitis, she jumped into action to help families like hers by founding the Epilepsy Foundation of Central & South Texas. She then drove her daughter six hours to an Epilepsy camp hosted by a different foundation. Seeing Jessica blossom at camp made Sindi realize that she needed to create her own camp closer to home. After searching for the right facility, she found Camp Aranzazu and it felt like coming home.

Her team found the ideal partnership at Camp Aranzazu. Says Sindi, "The facility is amazing, and campers can do everything...but Camp Aranzazu is so much more than just the facilities." Sindi credits the staff at Camp for the transformation she sees in campers. "They always approach the partnership with 'what can we do to make sure your children have the best experience?' They focus on us and our needs."

Parents of campers regularly share that camp has changed their child. Often, campers had never had friends with epilepsy. They may feel limited when participating in activities. But at Camp Aranzazu, our team customizes each activity so that everyone can join (if they choose). The result is a rise in confidence, a newfound sense of community, and life-long memories. Parents also receive a benefit, getting respite and focused time with a spouse or siblings.

The partnership between the Epilepsy Foundation of Central & South Texas and Camp Aranzazu means that we work together to plan and pay for Camp Brainstorm. Our partners pay a third of the cost of camp, while Camp Aranzazu underwrites the remainder. This financial partnership is critical for both organizations which are dedicated to ensuring that everyone who wants to attend camp can do so. "It's a priceless experience for the child and the parents," says Sindi. For more information about the Epilepsy Foundation of Central & South Texas, please visit www.efcst.org.

RESILIENCY FUND UPDATE

Only \$225,000 more is needed to receive a \$2.5 million matching gift!

Last year, Camp Aranzazu launched a \$10 million campaign to establish a permanent endowment. An anonymous donor pledged \$1 million outright and offered to match all additional gifts and pledges received by December 31, 2022, up to \$2.5 million. We have raised \$2,274,741 toward the matching gift challenge and only need another \$225,000 by December 31st in order to receive the full \$2.5 million match.

"The Camp is extremely grateful to the more than 50 donors who have supported this campaign," says Bobby Hatcher, chairman of the Resiliency Fund. "It has been a challenging fundraising environment, but the Camp has very loyal supporters, and they clearly believe in the long-term benefits that the endowment provides our campers and the Camp." The purpose of the endowment is to provide a stable, predictable source of funds to support the Camp's highest funding priorities— maintaining the 105-acre facility and keeping the cost of camp low so that as many children and adults as possible can attend.

Both gifts and pledges qualify for the match. Please contact Virginia Ballard (713-208-0072 or vballard@camparanzazu.org) to make your gift or to request more information. Gifts of all sizes are greatly appreciated!!

Visit www.camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund to see a list of contributors.

"Camp Aranzazu is special to me because it makes me feel important."



SAVE THE DATE!

Double Your Impact!

**BY SUPPORTING CAMP ARANZAZU THROUGH THE
COASTAL BEND DAY OF GIVING ON NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

www.coastalbenddayofgiving.org



"I can walk way
farther than I
thought possible!"



2022 Board of Directors

Keith Little, *Chair*
Fields Alexander, *Vice-Chair*
Daryl Allen
Mary Margaret Ara, M.D.
Traci McLester Arellano
Sara A. Baldwin, Ph.D., RN, APHN-BC
Casey Cullen
Blake Finger
Kathie Forney
Tom Forney, *Founder*
John Guill
Bobby Hatcher, *Treasurer*
Hunter Hawkins
Denise Hazen
Marks Moore
Bryan Phillips, *Secretary*
Joanne Taylor
Greg Watson

Advisory Board

Katie Brass
Tom Flaherty
Robin Floyd
Shannon Gunn
Gloria Hicks
Mark Kelly
Jack Kins
Rob McClane
Alison Leland McKinney
Jeff Panknin
Katherine Smelko
Ashley Rhodes Smith
George Strickhausen IV
Linda Strickland
Rona Train
Shannon Turner
John Watson

President

Kurt R. Podeszwa



SAN ANTONIO HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

Wednesday & Thursday
November 16-17, 2022

The Argyle | San Antonio Gun Club

Chairs: Angela & Trey Rabke



HOUSTON HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

Tuesday | December 6, 2022

Greater Houston Sports Club

Chairs: Shannon & Mark Nini

ZAZU
14TH ANNUAL

BBQ, MUSIC & MORE

Saturday | April 15, 2023
5 - 9 PM

Camp Aranzazu | Rockport, TX



QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT:

Kate Plouvier, Development Director, at kate@camparanzazu.org