



COASTAL CONNECTIONS

AN UPDATE FROM CAMP ARANZAZU

OCTOBER 2023

HOLLY'S Trolley



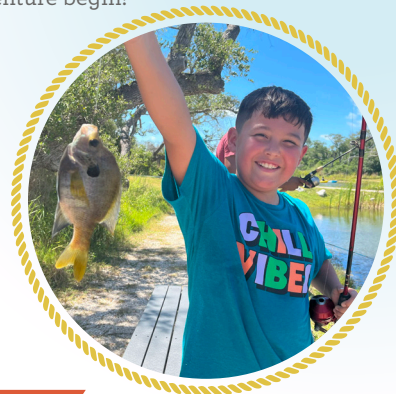
For many of our campers, our bayfront activities really set Camp Aranzazu apart from other places of fun and community. Many times, Camp Aranzazu is the first (and only) place campers can safely sail along the bay and enjoy evening fishing with the added benefit of green lights at the pier.

As we continue to improve our bayfront facilities and programming, our team realized the increasing need for transportation to the waterfront.

Until last summer, most of our campers would walk, roll, or scoot their way to bayfront, which shortened activity time, as well as requiring more energy than some were able to afford before they even reached the bayfront – especially during the summer months.

And so Holly's Trolley was created. Gifted by our founder, Tom Forney, and named for his

wife, Holly, Holly's Trolley is a custom wheelchair-accessible trolley that gives our campers a unique, barrier-free way to access all the fun our team has planned along the coast. The trolley is designed for 15 seats, leaving room for up to four wheelchairs. We also can make room for more wheelchairs by removing middle benches from the trolley. With the help of Holly's Trolley, campers can focus on relaxing and enjoying their scenic trip to the bayfront before the real fun and adventure begin!



If you've been to Camp Aranzazu in the last few years, you've likely seen the 600-foot bridge that spans FM 1781 which officially opened in 2018 as part of the *Unlimited Horizons Capital Campaign*. The bridge allows our campers access to our bayfront property and opportunities like sailing, fishing, and beachcombing along the Texas Gulf Coast.

A LETTER from our PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

Our campers and partners consistently remark on the high-quality

experience they have at Camp Aranzazu. This is based on more than our bayfront's natural beauty or beloved activities. This is thanks to the staff and our culture.

We hire the best – 13 full-time, 7 part-time, and up to 20 seasonal staff members. Then we onboard, train, and support them. We embrace our mistakes to cultivate a culture of listening, learning, and growing.

Joining a culture like this is not the norm, and for our college-aged seasonal staff, it can be life-changing. During training they

question themselves and their decision to work at the Camp. They wonder if they measure up to the standards set by previous staff. They lead their first activity, realizing it is harder than they thought. Then, our program team debriefs the activity, sharing successes and ways to improve. This cycle of discovery continues until our seasonal staff lead activities at the standard expected of them.

"I am tremendously proud of the full-time staff for creating this culture."

And then, campers arrive. Time speeds up. But our program team structures time to mentor these young adults, observing

activities and offering intentional feedback. I am tremendously proud of the full-time staff for creating this culture. The ability to be receptive to feedback and focused on growth is what makes our team the best.

That excellence translates to a top-notch experience for our campers as they, in turn, learn and grow, thanks to their time at Camp Aranzazu. I am honored to work with this team, and with you, to make such life-changing work possible.

Come visit us soon!

Kurt R. Podeszwa
President/CEO

Follow Us!



@camparanzazu



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

AUTISM COMMUNITY NETWORK



“I wanna come back next summer!”

“It was too short!”

“I can’t believe I was brave enough
to do the Screamer!”

These are just a few of many positive comments the leadership at Autism Community Network (ACN) received from campers after their first ever camping session at Camp Aranzazu. Serving the San Antonio community, the Autism Community Network maximizes the potential of children with autism by providing early diagnosis for those with limited access and educating and empowering the community to support them.

Named Camp We:Go, ACN’s camping session was created for the siblings of children with autism. After meeting with our President/CEO, Kurt R. Podeszwa, the ACN team knew Camp Aranzazu would be the perfect place to grow their program with siblings and give the team an understanding of the opportunities available at Camp Aranzazu before bringing a larger group of children on the autism spectrum.

While at Camp Aranzazu, our team focused on three goals for each of the activities designed for Camp We:Go.

1. **Experience something just for them;**
2. **Explore self-identity;**
3. **And, have a fun camping experience!**

The Director of Caregiver Empowerment with ACN, Adrienne T. Gaither, recognized that all the activities were designed just for her campers and each shared a piece of the special culture at Camp Aranzazu. “From the tiles that get put up all around the facilities to the embers that get shared with subsequent bonfires, everything was full of meaning and tradition; such an important part of making memories at camp!”

Our team loved welcoming Camp We:Go campers, creating fun just for them, and we can’t wait to welcome their campers back to Camp Aranzazu!



ARANZAZU TRADITIONS: *Campfires*



Campfires are a staple at thousands of camps across the country. Campers fall in love with the silly repeat-after-me songs, the wacky dance moves, and, of course, traditional s’mores with fire-roasted marshmallows and melted chocolate. But just like everything else at Camp Aranzazu, there’s always more to the fun. Our campfires also host a tradition that has come to be a favorite among campers, partner staff members, board members, and staff. At the start of each campfire, a member of our program team shakes a large plastic jar full of ashes and asks the group to guess what’s inside. Many times, campers will yell out “pebbles,” “sticks,” or some other creative item.

Then, our team shares that the jar holds something even more special to our team...campfire ashes. After each campfire since our founding, some of the ashes are collected and saved in the same large plastic jar and then added to the existing burning campfire. In doing so, all of our campfires have shared some of the same ashes, symbolizing a

connection of all of our camps. By honoring this tradition, our campers are reminded of the many joyful camp moments made through connecting with others over the last 17 years and the long-standing community of supporters they will have at Camp Aranzazu – even after they’ve left our gates.





BE AN ACTIVITY LEADER THIS SUMMER!

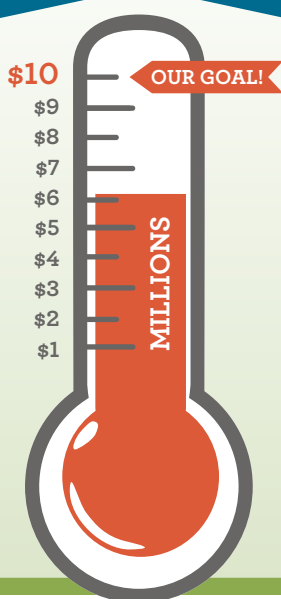
Every year, Camp Aranzazu hires roughly 20 college-aged individuals to work as Activity Leaders from mid-May to mid-August. An Activity Leader's job is to enrich the lives of campers with special needs through unique camping, environmental studies, retreat experiences and other programs. Activity Leaders are trained to facilitate a variety of activities including, but not limited to: arts and crafts, archery, high and low challenge courses, sports and games, kayaking, canoeing, Stand-up paddle boarding, sailing, fishing, swimming, nature sessions and more, all summer long!

If you or someone you know would be a good fit to join our staff next summer, visit <https://camparanzazu.org/careers> or email Carleigh Mitchell, program manager, at carleigh@camparanzazu.org.



"Now I feel like I have a bigger community of friends, so I have more opportunities."

RESILIENCY FUND UPDATE



LET'S GET *to the* FINISH LINE!

Tom Forney and John Elkins have joined Bobby Hatcher as co-chairs of the *Resiliency Fund Campaign* and will help the Camp reach the \$10 million goal. "We are excited to have Tom and John's help with Phase II of the campaign," says Virginia Ballard, executive director of the Camp Aranzazu Foundation. "I can't imagine two better people to help get us to the finish line."

The Hamill Foundation and The Moody Foundation recently made significant contributions to the campaign, bringing the total funds pledged or received to date up to **\$6,191,441**. Please visit <https://camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund> for a complete list of donors.

**WE'VE RAISED
\$6,191,441 AS OF
10/15/2023!**

"I've grown so much stamina at camp and just being able to experience the things I've always wanted to makes me so happy."

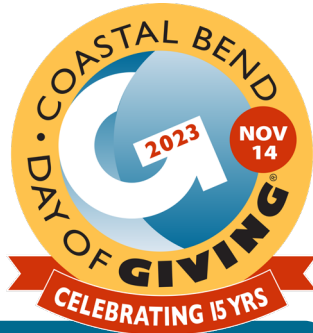


SAVE *the* DATE!

Double Your Impact!

By Supporting Camp Aranzazu Through
the Coastal Bend Day of Giving on
November 14, 2023

www.coastalbenddayofgiving.org



"I love camp and I love everyone here."

**SAN ANTONIO
HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS**

**Wednesday & Thursday
NOVEMBER 15-16, 2023**

The Argyle | San Antonio Gun Club

**"I can overcome
my fears."**



**HOUSTON
HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS**

TUESDAY | DECEMBER 5, 2023

Greater Houston Sports Club

**"I will be more brave
because of camp."**



ZAZU
15TH ANNUAL

MUSIC *and* MORE

SATURDAY | APRIL 27, 2024

3700 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas



EVENT CHAIRS:

Emily & Clayton Campbell

Camp Makes Me
SMILE



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John Watson

President/CEO

Kurt R. Podeszwa

To volunteer at our events, please contact
BIANCA HERNANDEZ at bianca@camparanzazu.org.

To learn about sponsorships, please contact
KATE PLOUVIER at kate@camparanzazu.org.