

CP CARES:

ADAPTING TO CHANGE
WITH CAMP NO LIMITS



CommPartners
Cares

CAMP NO LIMITS

The mission of Camp No Limits is to create a community for children with limb loss and differences to adapt and grow. Founder and CEO, Mary Leighton, didn't know just how much that community would have to adjust and, as a result, become stronger when stay-at-home orders were issued across the country due to COVID-19.

In 2004, while working as an Occupational Therapist, Mary was inspired by one of her patients with limb differences. She had the opportunity to watch him take his first steps, tie his shoes, and do many everyday activities while he learned to use his prosthesis. Camp No Limits was born from that relationship with the idea that kids learning to use prosthesis could benefit from the power of mentorship, therapy, and peer-to-peer connection. Camp No Limits started with four kids and has grown to include not just campers but their families at 10 camps nationwide.

The campers begin their day with exercise; then they participate in occupational and physical therapy, learning "life hacks" like cooking or getting dressed and working on gross motor life skills like riding a bike or running while using their prosthesis. There are also typical recreational camp activities like kayaking and rope courses. Campers have the unique opportunity to network with mentors who are adults that have similar differences as them, "[the campers] get to see them and how they've overcome things and how they've navigated the world," says Mary. There is also a Sibling Club and Support Groups for family members that have joined the campers.

Virtual Camp No Limits

Texas Schedule (April 24-26, 2020)

DAY 1: FRIDAY		DAY 2: SATURDAY	
TIME	ACTIVITY	TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 AM - 8:30 PM	Registration Virtual Camp	8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Registration Virtual Camp
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast	8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Session 1	9:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Session 1
1:00 PM - 1:30 PM	LUNCH BREAK	1:00 PM - 1:30 PM	LUNCH BREAK
1:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Session 2	1:30 PM - 2:00 PM	Session 2
2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Session 3	2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Session 3

Welcome to Camp No Limits Online!

Education

Certified therapists & prosthetists, adult amputees, and various organizations available at each camp.



Adapt and Grow

Camp No Limits was presented with a challenge to navigate this March as they were preparing for their Texas camp. As COVID-19 related travel restrictions increased all over the country, Mary and her staff knew the camp could not proceed as normal. After announcing the Texas camp was canceled, the No Limits families began asking for a virtual solution. That's when the camp's Marketing Director, Alix Sandler, reached out to CommPartners to help transition their camp into a virtual camp.

CommPartners built a virtual camp website that served as home base, so campers had access to all the sessions and camp information in one place. Transitioning a physical camp to a virtual platform may not seem like the natural choice, but the No Limits campers and staff did what they do best, adapt and grow. The No Limits team worked hard to incorporate creative elements in each activity to make camp interactive and social. The staff leveraged their energetic personalities and established relationships with the campers to cultivate "camp magic" that was felt through the screens.



Going virtual pushed everyone to think creatively and use their imaginations. It required an audit of all the activities that would be offered at camp and how they could be best made virtual. Most of the activities that would've normally been included at the physical camp were still included at virtual camp, with some adjustments. For example, Occupational Therapy requires therapists to be very hands-on, so for virtual camp, staff involved families in therapy and made sure to provide specific, step-by-step directions. All the camp fun and games like a scavenger hunt, karaoke, and the talent show were still included, but now there had to be more pre-planning.

For the talent show, all the campers recorded their talents and sent them to a dedicated staff member who compiled all the videos together into one big show for the campers to watch together. Similarly, the traditional campfire song required some pre-production. The mentors and staff preformed and recorded different portions of John Lennon's "Imagine." Campers sang along while roasting marshmallows at home, some even making a campfire in their backyard.



The creative juices were flowing to incorporate this year's camp activity of *Clue*, based on the board game. Staff members were assigned characters, and using the CommPartners' Zoom integration, they were able to make their character's world come alive by adding things like virtual backgrounds and music as campers solved the mystery.

Knowing how important it was for the kids to have down-time and to connect with each other, the Virtual No Limits Camp website featured a Social Hour break out room. The Social Hour brought together creativity and connection, where campers could join to chat, play games, and hang out during unstructured times. Kids would play for hours, organizing games of charades, hang-man, and give virtual tours of their homes. Social Hour forged the most important connections of camp, the connection between the campers.

CONNECTING A COMMUNITY

Virtual Camp No Limits brought community together and created connections like never before, “because of the connections we’ve been able to make virtually,[...] really expands our mission,” says Mary. A mother from Russia, whose child had never met anyone like her, found the camp on social media and asked to join halfway through as a brand new camper. Within 15 minutes of turning on her camera, she was jumping and dancing with the rest of the campers. Her mother said she had never seen her open up in that way before.

Another family joined from Kazakhstan. They were former campers who left the country and thought they would never have the opportunity to join the camp again. They don’t receive therapy and the same kind of acceptance for their child in Kazakhstan, so for them, being able to join virtually was a welcome surprise. When the camp was over, the family shared with Mary that they weren’t sure if they would ever get back to the US again, but now they can still be a part of camp.

For many No Limits families, traveling is not an easy option. It can be expensive and these campers represent a medically vulnerable population, which means traveling can pose many risks. Virtual camp is a way to be a part of camp without being at camp. Virtual camp is also an option for unsure campers. Alix says camp for any child can be scary, and this opportunity has allowed campers to dip in their toe. Virtual camp opened doors to many campers who usually would not have been able to join Camp No Limits.



The Future

“ *because of the connections we’ve been able to make virtually, really expands our mission* ”

Although physical camp can never be replaced, Mary says Virtual Camp No Limits isn’t going anywhere. Virtual Camp No Limits will remain an option for campers as long as travel restrictions and social distancing rules remain in place. Still, Mary and her staff are brainstorming how this virtual platform can expand their learning opportunities, “whether it is continuing education for staff or students, whether we hold webinars or how-to videos, [...] we are working out what that might look like”, says Alix. No matter what the future brings for Camp No Limits, they will continue to use creativity to adapt to change while bringing their community closer together. CommPartners is proud to contribute to the No Limits mission and expand their educational opportunities through our CP Cares initiative.