

A FIRST (BUT NOT LAST) FOR MICHAEL...

Meeting Michael Rudolph for the first time you might think he's quiet, reserved, and maybe even shy. Described as being a good friend, the 28-year-old has a reputation for being kind and supportive at the *Helping You Be, Belong & Become* (HUB) Day Program, which he attends full time at the Regina Branch. While Michael has mastered his "calm, cool, and collected" vibe – don't be fooled, he also likes to let loose, have fun, and experience new things with new friends when the opportunity presents itself! Luckily for him and the many campers who attended this summer, that opportunity came when Camp Easter Seal opened its doors for the first time in two years and invited participants to have the best summer ever!

The decision to register and attend Camp for the first time was all Michael's. "When it comes to trying new programs, I am often consulting with Michael directly rather than going to his supports. He is very independent and likes to be the one making decisions on his own behalf," explains Mikaylee Dreger, Service Coordinator at SaskAbilities. With that in mind, it didn't shock anyone when come July 11, Michael was en route, traveling 180 kilometers from Regina to Camp Easter Seal for his first five-day adventure out at Little Manitou Lake.

Despite the newness of his surroundings, it didn't take Michael long to get comfortable and make himself at home in cabin 14. "After the first two days, I could see the nervousness and those initial jitters starting to go away. He became more comfortable engaging with his cabin mates, calling the counsellors over by their first name, and having a laugh if someone cracked a joke," reflects Shay Arno, one of the seasonal Camp Counsellors who considered herself lucky to be able to support Michael during his first venture to Camp Easter Seal.

As for Michael's take on the experience? "Oh yeah, I'd go back," says Michael, announcing his favourite part about Camp was the social aspect. "I think meeting new people and making friends with the guys in my cabin was the best part."

While some might think being visually impaired would be limiting, especially when it comes to trying new activities in a new environment, that certainly was not the case for Michael. "Arts and crafts, basketball, activities in the aquatic centre and more, there were so many things he [Michael] tried for the first time and it was awesome to see! Anytime an activity was suggested, even if he



Camp Easter Seal is the flagship recreational program at SaskAbilities, located on 100 acres of picturesque green space on the shores of Little Manitou Lake near Watrous. Since its inception in 1954, Camp Easter Seal has provided children, youth, and adults experiencing disability in Saskatchewan with an accessible, barrier-free camping experience like no other in the province!

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For over 65 years Camp Easter Seal has provided campers a safe place to explore, grow, build friendships, and experience a level of independence many do not have in their everyday lives. Your contribution by becoming a member or renewing your membership supports the many enriching recreational programs available at SaskAbilities, accessible to individuals of all ages and abilities across the province.



had never experienced it before or wasn't sure how he would attempt it – he was open to trying. There were a few things I could tell he didn't think he could do, but we helped him figure it out," mentions Shay who admitted some new activities likely didn't make his "favourites list". But in true Michael fashion, he was polite and waited patiently for his cabin group to finish before moving onto the next thing.

Since Michael's introduction to SaskAbilities through Partners in Employment, he has embraced new programs and services like the *Helping You Be, Belong & Become* (HUB) Day Program and Camp Easter Seal. Taking an active role in choosing what is best for him, Michael is exercising his independence and autonomy in a safe and supportive environment, thanks to donors like you. Your support plays an integral part in ensuring recreational programs like Camp Easter Seal are available and accessible to the many children, youth, and adults experiencing disability who look forward to their five-day adventure each summer!

Sincerely,

Ian Wilkinson,
Executive Director

I know Michael left Camp with a lot of great friendships and bonds with his cabin mates. It was such an honour for me to be able to witness him feeling safe and comfortable enough to let his personality shine through – having fun and just relaxing, which is exactly what I think he wanted.

– Shay Arno, Camp Counsellor

Join or renew your membership with a monthly or annual donation and help us continue creating opportunities for children, youth, and adults experiencing disability in Saskatchewan. Your Membership includes voting privileges at our Annual General Meeting, quarterly newsletter, and the comfort of knowing you are improving the lives of amazing individuals like Michael!

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