

To: Designated Staff, Agencies and Consumers

From: Lori Plunkett, Executive Director, Brian's House

Re: **Camp Joy**

December 2, 2010

Camp Joy has been a leader in providing unique recreational opportunities for people with complex disabilities. Events of the past few years, however, have highlighted the risks and challenges associated with the operation of an overnight camp of this nature. The financial costs of ensuring a high-quality, safe environment have accelerated rapidly over the past few years. Issues including clients who are medically compromised, additional regulations and required accreditation, and the recruitment of qualified staff have forced our costs well above realistic charges for our programs.

Every summer of camp operation, for example, has seen us enrolling an increasingly complex group of clientele. Whether it's people with high-intensity behavioral challenges or complex medical disorders, we've been assuming great risk in our efforts to create a safe and healthy environment in which to provide a quality recreation experience. Please note that the clients attending the camp typically reside in the surrounding community and are not the Brian's House residents we know so well.

Because of the short-term nature of the camp season, and the subsequent reliance upon temporary employees, we're assigning relatively inexperienced people to be responsible for the care of our clients around-the-clock for several consecutive days during each session. In addition, the economics of providing such a program with the necessary numbers of experienced counselors and support staff would make the cost prohibitive.

Each summer season has seen a new cadre of temporary employees, mostly college students, all of whom seem eager to work with our population. Their intentions are admirable and, for the most part, they are committed to doing a good job. The fact that they tend to be inexperienced, however, has become a bigger concern as, more and more, we're asked to serve people with increasingly complex challenges. Our camp director, of course, is a full time professional, but there's only so much she can do at any given time. And we don't have the luxury of reassigning full time staff to work at the camp, as they already are charged with providing care and services to clients living with us year round.

We've had good success at fundraising to support the camp's operations and yet our costs continue to increase due to the complex nature of our campers, especially those with substantial medical needs. The last two years, the camp has lost a significant amount of money. Even if we dramatically raise our fees, it's unlikely we'll be able to

continue to secure well-trained and experienced staff in order to minimize the risks associated with serving those requesting this service.

For the reasons addressed in the foregoing paragraphs, effective immediately, we will cease to operate Camp Joy and the facility will be closed. The final disposition of the property has not yet been determined. While we sincerely regret this decision, our feeling it is in the best interest of the overall Brian's House program.