

2016 Running Blind – OUB Adventure Camp Was a Big Success!



The group on the beach at Charlevoix

Ten visually impaired youth and OUB (Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind) staff members accompanied by nine sighted staffers and volunteers recently participated in an Adventure Camp consisting of a 4 day canoe trip on the Big Manistee River followed by 2 days at Lake Charlevoix for some beach and boating fun. The canoe trip was arduous but fantastic. The OUB staff provided superb support as camp councilors, guides and with food and logistics support. Highlights included wonderful, well cooked meals, swimming in the river at a perfect swimming hole sandbar, seeing two bald eagles and many other waterfowl, and the great sense of accomplishment the kids and staff experienced in completing the often difficult journey. The final highlight was a great day of sun-drenched boating at Lake Charlevoix after being rain-drenched in a storm on the last day of canoeing that left everyone cold, tired and a bit beleaguered.

Running Blind founder Hal Wolfe (aka me!) was the trip organizer, co-host, co-sponsor, and primary guide. I was a full time canoe guide as a Boy Scout in the Boundary Waters of MN for two summers during college, so I was well suited for this trip. Any multi-day canoe trip can be challenging, especially since this was my first canoe trip in 25 years while also managing with more than half the group being partially to fully visually impaired. This made things very challenging, but gratifying in many ways. There were a couple of tense moments in the first hour on the river when a couple of canoes swamped, and some expressed doubts that the group could continue, but we recovered, I made some changes including lashing some canoes together, and we pushed on without any further incidents – although the first day was a long one as we didn't get to camp until 7:30 PM.



Relaxing at Charlevoix



Callie, RB staffer Hope and Yong getting ready to tube.

The final 2 days at Charlevoix staying in a motel were much less stressful and taxing and were a nice change of pace after the rigors of canoeing and camping along the river that included two nights at wilderness sites that had no fresh water or bathroom facilities. (Plus the room all had bathrooms and even had showers!) OUB Director Gwen Botting said “despite the general level of exhaustion, I think the trip was a great success.” It certainly pushed everyone, and that is exactly what it was intended to do. For me the last month has been pretty tough being very busy getting the trip ready, directing the Gallup Gallop 5K which is a Running Blind fundraiser event, and then heading out on the trip itself a few days after the race. Now I need some time to recover and enjoy summer a bit before it’s gone. More trip pictures and details should be available fairly soon.

- Hal

Care to donate? For those that already have donated, we appreciate it, but unfortunately the fundraising for the trip has not raised anywhere near enough money to cover the trip’s expenses so if more of you would consider making a donation, that would help us out and be greatly appreciated.

RB10K Donation link:

<https://www.givlet.org/donate/QKx5/>