

## **OUB / Running Blind's 2021 Charlevoix Boating Adventure Day is a big success!**

Grand Rapids based Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind (OUB) and Ypsilanti based Running Blind teamed up for the 6<sup>th</sup> time to support an “Adventure Camp” for visually impaired youth. This year’s camp was primarily in the UP, but ended with a spectacular day of boating on Lake Charlevoix lead by Running Blind’s founder Hal Wolff. “We’ve done this a number of times, and the kids always love it”, Wolff commented. “Most visually impaired kids don’t get a chance for water activities like this, but when they do, they eat it up.” Care for safety and adaptations for any such event are critical for visually impaired people. “For the tubing, we have to be careful getting on and off the tube, and if they fall off, which some did, we give them verbal cues to help them get back to the rope as we circle to pick them up. We filled up a big pontoon boat we rented from Boyne Watersports and had a great day on the lake.” (The event was held on Friday July 23<sup>rd</sup>.)

Running Blind is led by founder Hal Wolff of Ypsilanti and East Jordan, and OUB is led by Gwen Botting of Greenville MI. OUB provides the overall camp structure and the equipment and counselors needed for the series of camps they organize (most of the counselors are also visually impaired – many of whom are former campers) and Running Blind provides the funding and knowhow for the boating adventure. Hal grew up spending summers on Lake Charlevoix, so he knows the area well, and is happy to share his love for water sports with the OUB kids. “One young woman got off the boat and said that ‘this was the greatest experience so far of my life as a teenager’ and another camper who I was told hadn’t smiled the entire week, was beaming as he was riding around on the tube. Those kind of comments are priceless.”

Wolff commented that, “Giving young people who have a disability the means to understand how they can adapt to overcome it is critical to giving them the life skills and confidence they need to succeed in a complicated world. What I do only takes one day and some planning, but it creates memories that will last the kids and the young staffers a lifetime.” And Wolff added, “Once we get past all of the planning and logistical challenges of getting a dozen visually impaired people signed up and safely on the boat, it’s a whole lot of fun for everyone, including me. We have to be careful, but there are a whole lot of things that these kids can do that most people, including themselves, wouldn’t think they could do.”

Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind (OUB) and Running Blind are both 501c3 non-profits that support visually impaired people. To find out more information about OUB you can visit their website at [OUBMichigan.org](http://OUBMichigan.org). For Running Blind, you can visit their website at [RunningBlind.org](http://RunningBlind.org).



Campers Emerson (left) and Erica (right) with staff member Isaah in the middle enjoying the ride!



**Back Row:** Angela Smith (staff), Erica (Camper), Hal, Wolff (Running Blind founder), Kaitlin (staff), Halen Rice (staff), Emerson (camper), Avery (camper), Isaac (camper), Isaah (counselor,staff), Gwen Botting (OUB Exec Director), Rosanna Scott (counselor, staff), Cheryl Wade and Saline (volunteer).

**Front Row:** Anne Wolfe (volunteer), Justine (staff), Geri Feigelson and Sullie (volunteer), Victoria (camper), Jenna Scott (Hidden - counselor, staff), and Aric Wallace (OUB Camp Director). Photo by Angie Campoli (staff nurse)