

## Wellness G.I.F.T.S. --- Giving Inspiration for the Soul

BATH | "It's all about family," Wellness G.I.F.T.S. Executive Director Nicole Blough described.

The organization started as a passion project of Janet Opila-Lehman in 2001, and quickly found supportive partnerships in its simple mission: to provide educational, social, emotional, recreational activities, and respite care to all members of families who have children with special needs.

Uniquely, Wellness G.I.F.T.S. retreats are not simply a getaway for young participants with disabilities, but also a place for their families to find the "3-Rs" that motivate staff and volunteers.

"We always say that Respite, Recreation, and Rejuvenation are the things that make this place go," Blough said.



The typical three-day programs are offered in June, July and August, and a special event for those 18 and up is held in September. Activities at the Hammondsport-Bath KOA Resort include pizza parties, arts and crafts, wagon rides, bingo, sports, talent shows and much more --- The types of activities people with disabilities might not otherwise have access to.

Making it all happen, is a team of passionate volunteers, with inclusive, fun experiences at the front of their minds.

Above and beyond the many activities, camping retreats give the families of children with disabilities the opportunity to network and learn about resources they may not have known were available to them - an measurable value to the families.

"It's the best thing we can hear from participants, that they were helped by one another," Blough said.

It's for this reason that Wellness G.I.F.T.S. continues to seek ways to expand its programs.

When the summer has passed, the organization needs is supporters just as much. In the off-season, Wellness G.I.F.T.S. hosts many fundraising events that support their ability to put on retreats. This week, in partnership with Pampered Chef, supporters can help by ordering a consultation. Other upcoming events include a 24-hour day of giving on Dec. 3, and a "Paint Wellness" wine and arts event on Dec. 7.

To learn more about Wellness G.I.F.T.S. and express your support, visit their website or Facebook Fan Page.

