

TEENS TAKE TIME OFF

One of CCA's most popular support programs is its camps for teens, which encourages young people to come together and share their experiences in a supportive and age-appropriate environment. Here, CCA events co-ordinator Kate Zantuck reports on the success of the recent Queensland and NSW camps.

FUN IN THE SUN

CCA's first Queensland Youth Support Camp took place at the Currimundi Centre on the Sunshine Coast over the weekend of March 12-14.

The group of 11 teenagers travelled from all over Queensland, to attend the camp and meet other teenagers living with IBD. Special mention should be made of the efforts of Cody Matthews and his father, who undertook an eight-hour drive from the small rural township of Wowan to attend the camp.

Cody, 16, who was diagnosed with Crohn's disease four years ago, said the long journey was worth the rare chance for an extended meeting with peers who were facing the same physical and psychological issues.

"I have met a couple of other people with Crohn's when I fly to Brisbane for treatment, but there is no one else where I live or go to school," he said.

The weekend proved to be an overwhelming success, with attendees building lasting friendships and a strong support network to help them deal with issues they may face in the future.

The camp kicked off on Friday night with the teenagers participating in a games session to break the ice and start getting to know each other. A dinner was held at a Dicky Beach Surf Club for

the parents of the attendees, so they could meet other parents in the same situation as them - raising teenagers diagnosed with IBD.

The itinerary for the weekend included various activities, including beach games, building catapults, and a movie night. We did encounter some of Queensland's unpredictable weather, but this certainly didn't dampen anyone's spirits.

The teenagers also received a visit from nutritionist Gabrielle Oliphant, who explained the importance of nutrition in young people with IBD and made suggestions about the best choices when eating out with friends. Rebecca Leigh, a young entrepreneur living with Crohn's, also came to speak with the teenagers. Her main message was: Don't be angry with your body, make friends with your gut and look after you first.

We would like to thank everyone involved in helping to organise the youth camp. All the hard work paid off as the weekend was deemed a great success with all attendees saying they would love to attend another one in the future.

Special mention should be made of the following organisations that provided goods and services: Brisbane Roar, the Brisbane Bronco's, Officeworks, Nickelodeon, Le Tan, Village Cinemas, Boost Juice and the Queensland Bulls.



LIFE'S A BEACH

Over the weekend of April 16-18, families from all over NSW gathered at the Collaroy Centre in Sydney's Northern Beaches, for the 2010 ACT and NSW Youth Support Camp. We were lucky enough to have perfect weather, which highlighted the beauty of the venue and grounds.

Teenagers aged 13 to 18 years brought along their parents and siblings to give the family a well-deserved rest and to also meet other families in a similar situation.

The teenagers, parents and siblings each had separate activities, with the aim of getting a good balance between physical activity, relaxation and most importantly, socialising.

Some families commented that their teenager had never previously met anyone their age with IBD, including Ashleigh Ross, who travelled from New Zealand with her mother to attend.

"I have never even met or spoken to any other person, let alone teens, with Crohn's disease," Ashleigh, 14, said.

Her mother, Brenda, said she was happy to travel "over the ditch" to attend the camp, as there were no co-ordinated youth programs for New Zealand patients.

The teenagers and siblings enjoyed activities such as Friday night games, a challenge course, orienteering, low ropes and canoeing. The parents were invited to have coffee and dessert with two IBD nurses, and take part in a coastal walk along the Collaroy Beach headland, a quiz night and a relaxing massage.

"I would love to keep coming because we had so much fun and met new people and found out how many other kids are just the same." JOSIE, 14

Each group also attended an information session with IBD nurses Belinda Headon and Amanda Desira, who donated their time to attend the camp. After learning a bit more about the ins and outs of IBD, there was also time for questions, which everyone found very helpful.

To conclude the weekend, entertainment reporter and ex-Big Brother contestant, Pete Timbs, who has been living with Crohn's for many years, came along to speak to the teenagers and parents. He spoke about living and working with IBD and how to deal with some of the issues a young person with IBD may face. Susan Timbs, Pete's mother, who also has Crohn's, joined Pete for his session and spoke to the parents about both her and Pete's journey with IBD. All agreed that their presence was a great asset to the weekend.

CCA would like to thank everyone involved in making the weekend so enjoyable, especially our wonderful volunteers, without whom the weekend would not have been made possible.

Thank you to the following organisations for donating goods and services: Officeworks, Nickelodeon, Le Tan, Village Cinemas, Boost Juice, Dolly Magazine, The Body Shop and Empire Magazine.

