Elliot “Spiderman” Ortegon at VACC Camp.

**VACC Camp is “Paradise” for Kids with Ventilators**

“I t’s a week where he gets to feel special – treated like royalty,” said Mario Ortegon about his son Elliot’s experience at the Miami Children’s Hospital Ventilation Assisted Children’s Center (VACC Camp).

Elliot has attended the week-long camp every year for the last seven years. Now 19 years old, he was diagnosed with transverse myelitis, a neurological disorder caused by inflammation of the spinal cord, two months before his 11th birthday. It left him paralyzed from the tongue down and ventilator-assisted through a trach.

“He is nonverbal, so it gives him happiness to go and interact with people,” said Ortegon. “He totally enjoys it.”

VACC camp is a free, week-long, community-based camp program providing recreation and social support for families with children who need to use oxygen and/or ventilators long term.

And a full week it is. Campers and their families are kept busy with activities including music and shows, pizza and pajama parties, movies, a Hawaiian luau, a day at the beach, boat rides, bowling, art and games, to name a few. A volunteer staff of nurses and respiratory therapists and local teen-agers are on hand to provide parents and families with some leisure time.

**2011 Camps for Ventilator-Assisted Kids**


**June 5-10. Trail’s Edge Camp,** Camp Fowler, Mayville, Michigan. Contact Mary Buschell, RRT, Camp Director, 231-228-3371, mkbuschell@yahoo.com, www.med.umich.edu/mott/trailsedge/index.html.


**June 26-30. PA Vent Camp,** Camp Victory, Millville, Pennsylvania. Contact Robin Kingston, MSN, CRNP, 717-531-5337, rkingston@hmc.psu.edu.
Join IVUN!
...and receive Ventilator-Assisted Living, IVUN’s bi-monthly newsletter.

The eight-page newsletter will be sent electronically in February, April, June, August, October and December. (IVUN Members without email access may request print copies by contacting IVUN). Members will also receive an electronic IVUN Membership Memo in alternate months. To become a Member, complete this form. Memberships are 100 percent tax-deductible.

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314-534-0475, 314-534-5070 fax

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“Camp is an extraordinary experience for everyone involved – the staff, the campers and their families, and all the volunteers, adults and teens. Your life perspective changes after experiencing VACC Camp for the first time. I know that through camp we all make a difference in every camper’s life and that of their families too. You just have to see the smiles on the children’s faces to understand,” said Bela Florentin, VACC Camp Program Coordinator.

“That week at camp is paradise for Elliot,” said his father.

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**Conference Calendar 2011**

March 24-26. FOCUS on Respiratory Care and Sleep Medicine Annual Conference. The Town and Country Resort, San Diego, California. www.foocus.com


June 23-26. FSMA Family and Professionals Annual Conference. Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, Orlando, Florida. www.fsma.org

June 29–July 2. CCHS Family Conference, San Diego, California. www.cchsnetwork.org


November 5-8. AARC International Respiratory Congress. Tampa, Florida. www.aarc.org

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Elliot relaxes at the beach with camp volunteers.

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