

Report From Camp Dreamers: Review of the Wellness Retreat

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The purpose of this presentation is to describe the Post-Polio Wellness Retreat program and provide an evaluation in order to encourage replication of similar retreats in new localities.

The Post-Polio Wellness Retreat at Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation (RWSIR) was a five-day residential health promotion program customized for polio survivors. Its design was built upon a model program that was successfully conducted in upper Michigan in 2006, 2007, and 2008. For more information, go to <http://www.baycliff.org/> and link to Post Polio for a video review. Overall participant feedback from the Michigan program was positive:

"It's the best thing I ever did in my life."

"The retreat went far better than I had ever dreamed. Everyone was so positive and it met all of their goals and expectations. The sense of group support, acceptance and camaraderie was remarkable!"

"I can tell it will be a lifetime turning point for me."

Developed and led by Frederick M. Maynard, M.D. and a selected planning committee, the 2009 wellness retreat at RWSIR's wheelchair accessible Camp Dream provided an affordable and unique opportunity for 60 participants to take time away from their daily routines to totally focus on their post-polio health and well-being. Retreat attendees set their own learning and health goals for the week. Based on the premise that attention to good health should include all of a person's interlaced parts---mind, body and spirit---participants attended daily educational sessions. Some were didactic with discussion; most were experiential. These were scheduled as a morning lecture and discussion for the entire group, followed by several choices of smaller group programs throughout the day. Morning activities included a choice of exercise sessions. Then following lunch and a one-hour rest period, the afternoons were devoted to two-hour recreational options and then breakout sessions on a variety of topics. Massages, manicures, facials and haircuts were offered throughout two of the days. After supper, the evening programs included full group singing around a campfire, listening to the firsthand stories of a local "historian" about the area, a movie followed by group discussion, and time to visit and play board games.

With a theme of "Discovery," the basic curriculum more specifically encompassed the following selection of sessions.

- Full Group Instruction with Discussion
 - Post-Polio Wellness: A Holistic Overview Including the Role of Complementary and Alternative Medicine
 - The Post-Polio Body
 - The Mind: Self-Management Strategies for Wellness
 - Inspiration and Wellness: How Spirit Affects Health

- Bringing It All Together: Reflection and Carry Over
- Morning Exercise
 - Strengthening and Stretching
 - Restorative and Non-Fatiguing Yoga
 - Aquatics
 - Cardiovascular Training
 - Tai Chi
 - Exercise for Shoulder Problems
- Recreational Options
 - Adaptive kayaking
 - Adapted golf, bowling
 - Fishing
 - Adaptive biking and hand cycling
 - Arts for Healing
 - Tour of Historic Sites
 - Warm pool swimming
 - Nature walk and roll
 - Experiencing Massage, a Manicure, a Facial
- Afternoon Breakout Sessions
 - Ask the Doctor: Orthotist and Physical Therapist: Bracing and Walking Aids
 - Ask the Doctor: Pain Management
 - Ask the Doctor: Fatigue Management
 - Ask the Doctor: General Medicine
 - Ask the Dietician: Weight Loss Strategies
 - Healing with Botanicals
 - Ask the Pulmonologist and Respiratory Therapist: Breathing Problems
 - Ask the Physical Therapist: Seating to Alleviate Pain
 - Ask the Nurse: How to Best Access and Use Complementary Medicine
 - Ask the Nurse: Osteoporosis Wellness and Management
 - Ask the Psychologist: Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques for Chronic Pain
 - Caregivers and Spouses: A Time Together
 - Integrating Spirituality
 - The German Health Spa Program: What If You Went to a Spa?
 - Acupuncture
 - Acupressure

This five-day residential wellness retreat, led by post-polio medical specialists and key polio survivors can provide a useful model for post-polio groups internationally and around the U.S. who wish to sponsor similar programs in their areas. Those who would like to initiate plans for a similar retreat may want to consider the following planning steps:

1. Find a Wheelchair Accessible Camp or Overnight Retreat Center
2. Establish a Planning Committee with Core Faculty Including Retreat Co-Directors and an On-Site Program Coordinator
3. Create a Program Budget and Plans for Funding
4. Design a Schedule of Daily Retreat Activities
5. Select and Prepare Additional Session Instructors/Facilitators

6. Publicize the Retreat
7. Select and Prepare Retreat Participants
8. Conduct the Retreat
9. Evaluate the Retreat's Success Level
10. Inform and Help Others Succeed in Conducting a Post-Polio Wellness Retreat

Participant evaluations of the retreat are helpful. The following questions may be asked as part of this process:

For each session they attended,

1. Was the content useful?
2. Which parts in particular?
3. What is one idea or activity you plan to make part of your normal routine within the next few months?
4. Please comment on the facilitator's delivery, pace, ability to relate to the group and ability to individualize material to meet your needs.
5. Overall how would you rate the session:
5 excellent 4 good 3 average 2 below average 1 poor
6. Did you feel strengthened, refreshed and enlivened at the finish of this session? If yes, why? If no, why not?
7. Overall how would you rate the retreat:
5 excellent 4 good 3 average 2 below average 1 poor
What needs to be changed?
What was especially good?

Faculty and participant comments and evaluations at this Conference presentation of the Camp Dream experience will provide further programming insights and a foundation for the design and delivery of similar post-polio wellness programs.

For more information, contact Retreat Co-Directors, Frederick M. Maynard, M.D. at fredmaynardmd@gmail.com and Sunny Roller, M.A. at elsol@umich.edu