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Sunshine reigns at Shadow Lake: Fresh Air Fund

**For young people with intellectual disabilities,
there's plenty of fun, friendship and memorable**



JACK LAKEY / TORONTO STAR [Order this photo](#)

Chris Beddoe is back at Shadow Lake Centre for his 16th summer adventure. He loves drumming, swimming and all the activities. His favourite thing is seeing his friends.

By: [Leslie Ferenc](#) GTA, Published on Tue Jun 30 2015

STOUFFVILLE, ONT.—The sound of beating drums echoes across Shadow Lake, the tap, tap, tapping commanding attention.

Chris Beddoe joins the chorus, keeping time as his fingers hit the taut skin covering the drum. He smiles, happy to be with his friends at Shadow Lake Centre for a much-deserved vacation from life's daily rhythms.

Just being there makes him happy.

Owned and operated by Community Living Toronto, the centre is a summer retreat for those with intellectual disabilities. Some may also have physical challenges. Wheelchairs, walkers, braces and

canes are as much part of the landscape as the sandy beach, campfire circle, music cabin and canoes. Nothing can get in the way of a great summer getaway.

Beddoe has called Shadow Lake his favourite retreat for 16 years and simply can't imagine spending time away anywhere else.

"I have a lot of friends here," he says. "I love the staff, they're my good friends."

Beddoe has also met someone special at Shadow Lake and says Katie Buunk is "my soul mate, my destiny."

His words make her smile. They're looking forward to the Canada Day fireworks, which will be among the highlights of the week.

It's those lasting friendships and memorable experiences that are among the reasons Beddoe returns year after year. He also likes the activities, including boating and the famous lake swim from the beach to recently retired centre director Gary Ouellette's house and back. It takes stamina and willpower but the reward is priceless — bragging rights. The secret to success is taking to the water when it's nice and warm at the start, Beddoe says.

He also enjoys arts and crafts, but this summer's project — a zipper bracelet made of gold and black plastic string — is giving him a bit of trouble. "It's not easy," he says.

Good thing he's got plenty of time to master it.

Carolynn Robins is at Shadow Lake for the second time — her second vacation ever. She's enjoying the sunny afternoon, working on her large-print word search puzzle. After days of rain, the lake water is too chilly for her liking.

Robins is looking forward to receiving her official Shadow Lake t-shirt and baseball cap. It means she's part of the family, and that's a thrill.

"It's blue," she says of the shirt. "I'm going to show it to all my friends at home. I live in a home in Peterborough. Do you know how to spell that, because it's hard for some people."

Like the other guests, Robins loves being at Shadow Lake "because I've made some great friends."

She's also adores the bead bracelet and headband she received while at the centre. The thing is, every day has been perfect so far.

"I've had a really good sleep and am relaxed," says Robins smiling. "And the meals are good, too."

Though she's only been at the lake for a few days, Robins knows she'll be sad to leave. She missed camp when she left last year.

"I'll be asking them to take me back," a determined Robins says. "That's for sure."

Goal: \$650,000

To date: \$472,497

How to donate: With your gift, the Fresh Air Fund can help send 25,000 disadvantaged and special needs children to camp. The experience gives these children much more than relief from summer heat – it gives them a break in life and memories to last a lifetime. Our target is \$650,000.

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