

## “Feel the Spirit” at the Buju Sommercamp 2010!

In this year, from July 30<sup>th</sup> until August 6<sup>th</sup>, the sixth Sommercamp took place in Borken/ North Rhine-Westphalia... and it has been a thorough success! It will not be easy to describe such an ultimate event like this Sommercamp on only one page.

The Sommercamp is the greatest leisure activity in Europe which especially aims at helping the young hearing-impaired participants to cope with their handicap in everyday life. It is organised and conducted by an expert team (the so-called “Teamer”) who are mostly affected themselves. About 150 participants were there and shared a time full of activities, experiences, fun, joy, sunshine and also rain together. One of the central elements were the 24 workshops which were both informative and creative or sportive, respectively – like e.g. self-confidence training, sign language courses, archery, capoeira or canvas painting. Beside the workshops,

many leisure activities were offered so that the participants could fill their free time between and after the workshop sessions. On the second day, the so-called “castle games” took place, themed “Pirates of the Castle”. The participants were divided into small groups which had to fulfil different sportive and mental tasks at several stations, e.g. shooting shaving foam off one's face with a water pistol. These games aimed at helping the participants to get to know



each other better and encourage future acquaintances. On the other days, sportive events were offered, like volleyball, soccer, frisbee or table tennis, also as tournaments. Additionally, a climbing wall was open to the public all the time and who aimed high could try to climb to the last stone at the wall.

The further evenings were also stuffed with interesting events. Two theme nights with three themes each time were offered. To everyone's own taste, one could e.g. learn something about working in a school for the deaf in Ghana, about traveling to New Zealand or about stress management. As well, we got the chance to discuss about God and religion or also to experiment with colours and different design techniques.



The night programme left nothing to be desired: we either shook our legs in the disco, sang out of tune at the karaoke party or just played table games in small groups. Whenever and wherever you walked about the castle terrain, you could see teenagers and/or young adults standing together and talking with flying hands, laughing and just having fun together! Even our patron, the actor and life partner of an hearing impaired woman, Wolfgang S. Zechmayer, was on site and shared

his time with us, obviously enjoying it.

The days were enthusiastically extended into the nights, we danced and chatted far into the night, no matter the little sleep we got afterwards, no matter the tiredness on the next day.

All these manifold activities and happenings were framed by successful opening and ending events, the latter of which ended in a great final party... where the community spirit, which was omnipresent during the six days, was very intense.

A question: What makes this Sommercamp so special, comparing to other camps? The fact that the participants came from everywhere in Germany and neighboring countries?

No. The workshops and theme nights with useful and interesting take home messages? Maybe. The precise answer is: the communication, resulting from the hearing impairment, makes the difference!

Our communication needs are unique, as is everyone's hearing impairment. Every single one of us communicates in a different way (spoken language, sign language, both) and has different needs (technical aids, captioners, sign language interpreter)... and the Sommercamp is able to meet exactly those requirements. As well, the Sommercamp is a place where hearing impaired people, having all kinds of personal backgrounds, can find each other and meet, share their experiences and create a special community, an atmosphere, which feels like a shelter from everyday life and is characterized by mutual understanding, patience and consideration towards each other together.

Again, as in the five Sommercamps before, this Sommercamp revealed the quite great potential in every single one of us hearing impaired which we should make use of to improve the society in which we, the hearing impaired, are really *heard*.

Finally, we can say: the "spirit" was everywhere and everyone felt it!

By the way: Thank you very much to Silvio Philipp, Nina Morgenstern and all other "Teamers" for their honorary work before and during the Sommercamp and for investing much of their free time to get this Sommercamp going... on and on and on. Without them, the "Sommercamp spirit" would never have arisen. Many thanks to all sponsors who financially contributed to realize the Sommercamp 2010.

*(written by Hannah Janssen, participant at the SC 2010)*

