



The Sherman Family

By: Debbie Sherman

Back in 2013, our family heard about Camp Attitude from a presentation that was made to our church. We were intrigued, but had no real idea what to expect, (and if I'm being honest, we were a little leery of the entire experience.) We have four children with Down syndrome, and the idea of allowing them to hang out with a "buddy" that we didn't know, was a bit unsettling.

Upon arriving, before we were all out of the car, our 13-year-old disappeared with a young woman, who took Jenessa on a long walk through the woods. By the next day the two were inseparable, and Taylor became Jenessa's buddy for the week. Our other children were equally blessed with wonderful buddies, but the friendship that blossomed between Jenessa and Taylor was something special. They had a fantastic week at camp, and when it came time to go there were tears and promises to keep in touch.

They began sending cards to each other for holidays and birthdays, and even small gifts at Christmas. When our family signed up for another year at Camp, Taylor worked out her schedule so she could come the same week and became Jenessa's buddy for the second year in a row.

The next November, Taylor and her family (all 7 of them!) made the 5-hour drive from Prineville to the coast, so the girls could spend time together. Taylor was now a senior in high school and could have been doing a million other things with her time. Our families became fast friends, and by the following summer, Taylor had agreed to move in with us and work for us (helping out with our 4 special kiddos) and became an extended part of our family. Another trip to Camp, another week as Jenessa's buddy, and an entire summer the girls got to spend together.

Taylor went off to college now, but as busy as she was, she always made time for Jenessa. She lived with us again that next summer, working to save money for school. Although we did not go to Camp (after three years in a row we felt it was time to give our spot to other families) the girls continued to stay in touch. She worked for us (and lived with us) again the next summer and was planning to do the same the following summer...but somewhere along the way she fell in love and ended up planning a wedding instead.

Taylor asked Jenessa to be one of bridesmaids! “She’s one of my best friends, and I can’t imagine her NOT being in my wedding!” This is not the type of opportunity I would have ever thought possible for Jenessa. A friendship...yes. Being in a friend’s wedding? Wow! I cannot tell you how many (happy) tears I cried over this. Jenessa was over-the-moon excited, and enjoyed being part of the wedding party, along with the other “big girls.”

That was a few years ago, and the two still maintain their friendship today. This summer, Taylor and her husband Ben will be joining us for a few days on our annual houseboat vacation. And all because of a special place called Camp Attitude.

