



## Beat Retreat 2015

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### 7<sup>th</sup> annual Beat Retreat brings adult CHD patients and professionals together

What has 36 hearts, 72 legs, and more enthusiasm than you can shake a stick at? Give up? The Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance's 7<sup>th</sup> annual Beat Retreat, held September 17-20, 2015.

The Beat Retreat is a fun-filled, four-day annual event for adults with congenital heart disease (ACHD). This year's retreat - the biggest to date - drew together 27 adult congenital heart disease (CHD) patients, two caregivers, and seven health care professionals from Southern Ontario, Quebec and even Alberta.

While at camp, attendees took part in a mix of traditional camp activities - all geared to their physical ability and comfort level. Activities included canoeing, archery, yoga, crafts, a campfire, wall climbing, initiatives course, a table hockey tournament and, for the truly adventurous, a polar bear dip.

Participants also had the opportunity to tap into the knowledge of several volunteers and guests from the healthcare community, including a cardiologist, a cardiology fellow, three nurse practitioners, a cardiac rehab specialist, and an administrative assistant. The healthcare professionals hosted an informal 90-minute question and answer session. A presentation on the importance and value of cardiac rehab was also offered.



Because many adult CHD patients face financial challenges due to their health status, the CCHA subsidizes the lion's share of the event's cost. "We believe the retreat is an important program and want to ensure that it's financially accessible to everyone who wants to participate," says Toby Cox, the retreat's co-coordinator. Participants pay only \$75 each to help offset the cost of food, accommodation and programming.

"Based on the evaluation forms we received, this year's retreat was an incredible success," said Cox. "Patients clearly appreciate the opportunity to come together, share their experiences and learn from others."

"It's a real bonding experience," she added. "The friendships campers build last from one year to the next. Campers continue to stay in touch on our Facebook page and many get together throughout the year for various social and fund-raising events."

Organizers have already set the dates for next year's retreat - September 15-18, 2016. For more information on the Beat Retreat, click on the Beat Retreat menu. And be sure to check out our Beat Retreat Facebook page.

The retreat is held at Camp Quin-Mo-Lac - a beautiful 240-acre camp located on the shores of Moira Lake, about 30 minutes north of Belleville.



