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Camp Lightbulb Raises Funds For LGBT Youth Holiday Travel

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
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On Thursday, October 29 at Elmo lounge in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City, Camp Lightbulb will hold their "Masquerade Party," a benefit to send their LGBT teen campers to New York City for the holidays.

"We have gotten so much feedback from campers, parents and support workers saying the camp has had such a big, life-saving impact on them, and wouldn't it be nice if we had more events," said Puck Markham, Founding Director of Camp Lightbulb. "When I first started thinking about expanding, it was to do more of the summer camp. But because these kids come from across the U.S., we decided to try to do events throughout the year in different locations. The holiday season in New York is so magical, we are trying these to see if we can bring the idea of summer camp to this key holiday."

The holiday camp will be held from Dec. 26-30. Fifteen campers will be staying at the Vanderbilt YMCA, and enjoying the holiday sights of New York City, including ice skating at The Standard Hotel, a show at Radio City Music Hall, a tour of Greenwich

Village a trip to the Big Gay Ice Cream shop and more.

"We are bringing together a blend of summer camp and the urban experience into something LGBT-focused," said Markham. "We also want to do a big teen party; one of our donors in Chelsea invited us to his apartment for pizza. And Jim Lecesne, who co-founded the Trevor Project, invited us to his show about teen bullying."



Camp Lightbulb (Source: Vicky & Zay)

Markham first founded Camp Lightbulb in August 2012 in Provincetown, MA, to give LGBTQ young people aged 14-17 years old a week-long, overnight summer camp experience. A diverse mix of campers come from all across the U.S., some from homeless centers like Ali Forney Center or Boston's Home for Little Wanderers, other from more comfortable backgrounds.

Camp Lightbulb is committed to providing the camp experience to all and roughly 40 percent of their campers receive full or partial scholarships. Markham said that they are need-blind,

adding, "if someone is interested in applying, we will try to make it happen for them." The Halloween event at Elmo will help raise funds to support these LGBT campers from across the country.

"One thing LGBTQ kids miss is that there's not a lot of activities geared toward gay youth, who are 6-8 times more likely to be bullied, be homeless, and not have the same opportunities as their straight counterparts," said Markham. "To have somewhere to go for Christmas with their friends from summer camp is to provide an important experience for these youth."

Come support these LGBTQ youth at their "Masquerade Party" from 6-9 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 29 at The Lounge at Elmo Restaurant, 156 Seventh Ave., New York. Suggested donation is \$50.

For information, visit www.camplightbulb.org



Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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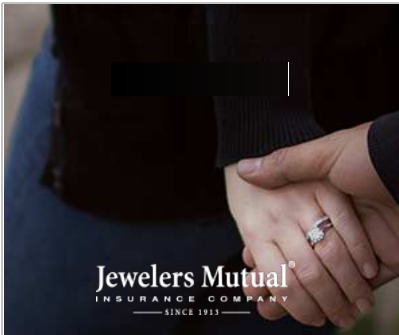
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