

Participants at the August 2010 retreat at Baker Boy Scout Camp on Siltcoos Lake.

Autism Rocks!

April is Autism Awareness Month



“Star Wars” camp is an annual mask-making party held just before Halloween as a fun activity and fundraiser. Members of The Cloud City Garrison join in for photo ops.

COURTESY OF KIND TREE-AUTISM ROCKS (2)

BY VANESSA SALVIA

WHILE THE JURY IS STILL OUT on what causes autism, there’s no doubt that the disorder is something that more and more people are learning to live with. The spectrum of autism disorders encompasses a wide range of symptoms, from social awkwardness and sensory sensitivity to a complete inability to interact and communicate.

Autism Rocks aims to celebrate those differences and allow people with autism to simply be themselves, says secretary and treasurer Tim Mueller. The nonprofit organization was formed in 1997 by Steve Brown and Michelle Jones, friends of Mueller’s, who invited people with autism and their caregivers to enjoy a relaxing weekend at a retreat center. The camp has since become an annual event, the only one of its kind in Oregon. Last summer, 140 guests and 75 volunteers enjoyed a three-day retreat at Baker Boy Scout Camp on Siltcoos Lake. “The camp creates a sense of community,” says Mueller. “It’s easy to think, ‘I’m alone in the world with my disability and no one likes me,’ and having a community is the best defense for that. The camp is a short-lived but deep expression of that community.”

