



GulfBreeze – Cystic Fibrosis Surf Camp

In August, the Maui Ola Foundation (MOF) road tour returned for a second Surf Experience Day for persons with genetic disorders. Local pro surfer and owner of Texas Surf Camps (TSC), Morgan Faulkner, along with ten pro surfers on the MOF road tour made this event in Port Aransas a great success for the patients and families who were there.

Maui Ola.....breath of life

In 2000, Ambry Genetics developed a breakthrough technology for full gene testing related to the diagnosis of Cystic Fibrosis. This technology is now used in national and global research by academic institutions, pharmaceutical companies and most of the major children's and university hospitals. In 2007, Ambry Genetics created the non-profit MOF and since then Bobby Serna, Surf Experience Director, has coordinated over 50 events across the country and in Hawaii for over 800 Cystic Fibrosis patients.

The MOF was organized to promote education, awareness and increase research for genetic disorders. Funds are raised to support programs for kids and adults with life-threatening illnesses and disabilities through social events such as music concerts, sports events and Surf Experience Day events. The Surf Experience Day focuses on the connection between surfing and Cystic Fibrosis to provide an enjoyable option to help children with genetic disorders have a healthier way of life through natural treatments. Numerous professional surfers participate in each of the Surf Experience Day events as well as making hospital visits during their extensive road tours.

Therapy.....mental and physical

MOF Surf Experience Days were created to get kids who have Cystic Fibrosis into the ocean water to experience what a natural saline therapy can do for their lungs. The exercise and fun is fantastic and kids who have Cystic Fibrosis respond very well to the salt water environment. The saline in the air and water breaks down the congestion that is in their lungs. This congestion requires frequent saline treatments in hospitals and daily medication. It has been determined that surfing can contribute to a healthier, more fulfilling life while having fun.

Professional surfers help each camper catch a wave, learn to stand-up on the board and ride the wave to the beach. Although some of the campers have initial reservations, most are comfortable after their first ride. Morgan Faulkner's TSC provided surfboards and shade tents for the MOF Surf Experience Camps held at Port Aransas and Galveston.

Cystic Fibrosis.....patients and families

Talking with the children diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis was informative; their lives are full of constant challenges to maintain the necessary treatments. Pulmonary and digestive treatments include inhalation therapy, nutritional enzyme and antibiotic treatments. Multiple daily treatments at home are normal and extended stays in hospitals are also common.

This was the first time any of the kids have tried surfing. Jeremy Wingate, age 12, who did very well also enjoys football and river rafting. His parents Derek and Niki along with brothers Evan and Blake drove from New Braunsfels.

Tori Bourland, age 11, her sister Winter and mother Krystal, drove from Austin for the event. Nathan Costello, age 14, brother Cameron and mother Hollie also drove from Austin. Anthony Holloway, age 21, just six months after a lung transplant, was actively enjoying the surf during the event.

Overall the children remain positive throughout their daily ordeals. Their attitude and the support of other patients, families and treatment facilities are important. There are times when patients become non-compliant with their treatments; this often leads to more problems often requiring hospital admission to help stabilize the patient for return to home treatments. The financial drain and often limited insurance coverage further complicates family matters.

Sharing the stoke.....not just surfing

It is difficult to say who, volunteers or campers, has the most stoke at these surf camps, everyone who participated looks forward to the next MOF Surf Experience Day. Another important aspect of the MOF is making visits to local hospitals and treatment facilities during the road trip. These visits allow many patients a chance to meet the professional surfers when they are otherwise unable to participate in the Surf Experience Day events. In addition to Port Aransas and Galveston, MOF Surf Experience Days are held in northern and southern California; Florida; the Carolinas; Virginia; New Hampshire and Hawaii.

Photos and captions:



Campers (orange shirts), families and pro surfers



This girl was riding waves like a natural



Jeremy Wingate enjoys one of his many wave rides



Pro surfers autograph poster for event participants