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Summer Camp Kicks Off at Harkness Everybody Deserves a Little Fun in the Sun

CAMP HARKNESS, CT – A full slate of summer events, from luaus and leis to cowboys and fun skits, kicked off in June and will run through mid-August as nearly 300 local campers take part in the annual festivities of Camp Harkness in Waterford. Popular among campers of all ages, Harkness provides a quality vacation experience for all individuals with disabilities as well as a respite for families and care providers.

Sponsored by The Arc of New London County, Camp Harkness is funded by camp fees and The Arc's Annual Jack O'Keefe Memorial Strides Road Race as well as its spring Pirate Party fundraiser. A new addition this year – a pilot program for children on the Autism Spectrum operated by The Arc in partnership with the Connecticut Family Support Network – is a Day Camp for youth ages 8 to 21, funded by a host of generous local businesses and organizations, including the Kelsey Foundation, Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, Southeastern Connecticut Advocates for Developmental Disabilities, Chelsea Groton Bank, the Niantic Lion's club, Oswegatchie School, the Groton Rotary Club and a host of individual donors. Camping programs for people with disabilities also are being operated this Summer by UCP, Camp Dragonfly at Oak Hill School (Connecticut Institute for the Blind) and Southbury Training School.

Camp Harkness and its related activities offer each participant a genuine vacation experience away from jobs, living environments and every-day routines. Camp Director Jeannette Hickey, who oversees daily operations, events and entertainment also serves as a teacher in the Ledyard Public Schools.

"Everyone deserves a vacation experience," Hickey says, "and that's what we're here to provide. We have fun in the sun at Camp Harkness. Without the camp, particularly in these tough economic times, individuals would not have the kind of Summer the rest of us take for granted." With six residential adult camp programs, a residential youth camp and a one-week day camp, Camp Harkness is running at full capacity this year and will host a total of 270 individuals through the Summer.

Founded by parents in 1952 to provide educational opportunities at that time unavailable to their children through the public schools, The Arc of New London County is a grass roots non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

The Arc's upcoming 32nd Annual Jack O'Keefe Memorial Strides Road Race to benefit Camp Harkness as well as The Arc's recreation and related programs, will be held at Camp Harkness on October 4, 2009. For more information on the 10K, 5K and 1K Family Fun Run & Walk, visit www.thearcnlc.org

NOTE: The Arc of New London County is New London County's agency of choice for many people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities. Located at 125 Sachem Street in Norwich, Connecticut, The Arc was established in 1952 by parents of children with intellectual disabilities to serve the citizens of New London County. Board of Directors: Diane Aubin, President; Enrico DeMatto, Vice President; Catherine Steel, Secretary; John Fournier, Treasurer; Jessica Clark, Client Representative; Members: Karen DiSaia, Deborah Gregoire, Diane Harrington, Joanne Kerr, Alan Messier, Tom Reynolds, Linda Rhodes, Anthony Walstra. Immediate Past President: Shannon Aiello.

