

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OWL CAMP PROVIDES SUMMER FUN FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

Campers will spend a week in the great outdoors at YMCA Camp Classen

**Oklahoma City, OK (July 12, 2018)** – NewView Oklahoma believes that every child deserves to have a summer camp experience, and that’s why [OWL Camp](#), or Oklahomans Without Limits, was created in 2000 for children who are blind or visually impaired. This summer, campers ages 8 to 14 years old will gather in Davis, Oklahoma July 15-21 at YMCA Camp Classen to experience camping in the great outdoors.

OWL Camp activities are carefully planned and designed to encourage collaboration, improve confidence, self-esteem and independence and challenge societal and self-imposed limits. Campers and their sighted buddies will participate in activities such as rock-climbing, archery, horseback riding, swimming and kayaking.

“Attending Owl Camp is truly a life changing experience for all involved,” said Cathy Holden, senior vice president of rehabilitation and clinical operations at NewView. “It is such a joy to see the kids come together to create a unique camping experience, one which allows for creativity and celebrates everyone’s strengths. NewView is all about empowering an individual to accomplish their goals by overcoming challenges which follow us throughout life. The results of Owl Camp are truly magical.”

OWL Camp is structured specifically to engage sighted children and those with vision loss. Each blind or visually impaired camper is partnered with a sighted buddy for the entire week, and they do everything together. The goal is to provide lasting effects by allowing the sighted buddies to understand that people with vision loss can do anything they can do, with very little adaption.

Lauren Branch, president and CEO of NewView explained, “Our hope is that the sighted buddies will go back to their peers and share their experience to help eliminate the stigma that is too often associated with kids and disabilities.”

This is the first year that NewView’s OWL Camp will be held at YMCA Camp Classen in the Arbuckle Mountains. The Y’s overnight camping program began in 1920 and the Y’s Camp Classen served more than 4,400 resident campers last including more than 3,500 through their outdoor education sessions.

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“We are excited about partnering with NewView and their OWL camp,” stated Jason Brown, YMCA Camp Classen director. “Camp Classen is such an amazing place that has impacted so many lives, and we look forward to seeing how OWL campers will be impacted through their experience here.” He continued, “We have made significant improvements to ensure our facilities are ADA compliant. Our new shower house is equipped with showers, restrooms, sinks, walkways, ramps and water fountains that are compliant, and Macleod Chapel and the dining hall have ramps and seating to help with accessibility.”

On Friday, July 20, the NewView OWL Campers will get to share activities with blind and visually impaired campers from [Heather’s Camp](#) in Wichita, Kansas who will be spending a week at Camp Classen on July 19-22. That evening, more than 100 campers and buddies from the combined camps will be dining together in the camp cafeteria and then participating in activities such as goal ball, beat ball, carpet ball and other field games before a joint campfire on the beach, complete with smores and songs.

“As a presenting sponsor of Heather’s Camp, [Envision](#) is excited by this year’s move to YMCA Camp Classen and the range of activities that will be available to our youth campers who have never let their vision loss stop them from seeking outdoor adventures,” said Bonnie Cochran, director of support programs at Envision. “We are thrilled that the scheduling of Heather’s Camp and NewView Oklahoma’s OWL Camp will allow our participants and Delta Gamma volunteers to come together as a large group for one full day of fun and friendship.”

To learn more about NewView OWL Camp and other programs and clinical services operated by the organization, visit [www.newviewoklahoma.org](http://www.newviewoklahoma.org).

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#### **About NewView Oklahoma:**

NewView Oklahoma is a private, not-for-profit organization founded in 1949 with a mission to empower people who are blind and visually impaired to achieve their maximum level of independence through employment, low vision rehabilitation, and community outreach. NewView Oklahoma is the leading employer of the blind and visually impaired individuals in Oklahoma and offers the only comprehensive Low Vision clinics in the state. Visit online at [www.newviewoklahoma.org](http://www.newviewoklahoma.org) or follow on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).

#### **About the Y:**

The Y is one of the nation’s leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the Oklahoma City Metro, 15 Ys engage more than 160,000 men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Learn more at [ymcaokc.org](http://ymcaokc.org).

#### **About Envision:**

Envision promotes advocacy and independence for those who are blind or low vision. Founded in 1933, Envision is one of the largest employers of individuals with vision loss in the nation. Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, Envision’s mission is to improve the quality of life and provide inspiration and opportunity for people who are blind or visually impaired through employment, outreach, rehabilitation, education and research. For more information, visit [www.envisionus.com](http://www.envisionus.com).

#### **About Heather’s Camp:**

Launched in 2001, [Heather’s Camp](#) honors the memory of Heather Muller, a Wichita State University (WSU) alumna and member of the Delta Gamma fraternity who had been pursuing her master’s degree in early childhood special education when her life was tragically cut short. Heather’s love of children and desire to help those with special needs lives on at Heather’s Camp, a not-for-profit organization that is staffed by many volunteers, including alumnae and collegiate Delta Gamma members at WSU.