At the end of April 2020, Camp Abilities Saratoga Director Tiffany Suppes discovered they would not be able to hold Camp Abilities in-person on the Skidmore Campus again this year due to the Covid pandemic.

Instead of not holding the camp, the Camp Abilities Board of Directors decided they were going to offer a virtual experience for the campers. It would definitely be different, but everyone was excited about the venture! The Board worked up a new, revised budget and Tiffany along with Camp Assistant Director, Jeff Yellen, got to work with their coaches to put together a virtual experience for this year's campers. Under Tiffany's direction, the Board purchased equipment that would be sent home in kits for the campers to use and to keep. In addition, iPads were purchased and lent out to those campers who had the technology need in order to participate.

As Camp Director Tiffany said in an interview with Saratoga Today regarding the virtual camp, "We will all have a chance to talk together. A lot of our campers have been coming here for years and they've made a lot of friends that have visual impairments as well. That's not always the case in school for them. A lot of times they're the only child in a school district that may have a visual impairment so it's nice that they made these connections and friends with each other. It lets them be kids."

The camp, held virtually from August 9 to 14, was a huge success as you can read from comments given by the campers, their families and the counselors!

Camp Abilities Saratoga 2020 Testimonials

From our campers...

"I love camp so much. This year was different but still awesome! Camp Abilities makes me feel I am someone for sports! Miss everyone!" ~ Austin

"Virtual camp was fun and solving mystery games through my phone was different. I also like all the equipment that was given to us to use. I did get to stay with my family and still do fun activites with camp abilities but miss getting to see everyone at once." ~ Isaiah

"I loved all of the cool gear that came in my CAS Virtual Camp box. I took some things on vacation with me. Camp inspires me to stay active." ~ Ronan

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From a parent...
"Hi coaches! ...I wanted to say thank you for all of these morning workout sessions - they're awesome!" ~ Jen, Ted's mom

From our counselors...
"What I enjoyed most about Virtual Camp Abilities Saratoga 2020 was the ability of our families to experience more of camp. In a normal camp year our families are there for the beginning kick-off and the celebration at the end, but this year they were able to experience the magic of the entire week with us. Having families witness the growth and development of their athlete throughout the week was truly special. ... Every year we see the impact of camp extend beyond just that one week, but this year if feels that effect will be magnified even more." ~ Coach Sara

"CAS 2020 was a huge success for not only the athletes and the families, but for the staff and Lions Club members. Tireless hours were put into the first ever virtual Camp Abilities Saratoga and it worked! Athletes were involved in many different physical activities and were given a chance to see their friends through zoom. The effort and support from the athlete's families did not go unnoticed. Families worked so hard to support and participate with their children during the week of camp. I believe that relationships grew stronger between families because of how involved they were during the activities. Great big shout out to the Lions members, Jeff, Tiff, sport specialists and families for making this year a big success." ~ Coach Alex

Tom Panek, CEO of Guiding Eyes for the Blind, gives the opening address for the 2020 camp.

If you'd like to hear the highly motivational presentation that was given at Opening Ceremonies by our keynote speaker, Tom Panek, president and CEO of Guiding Eyes for the Blind, you can do so with this link: www.tinyurl.com/CAS2020TomPanek

Camp Abilities Saratoga

Camp Abilities Saratoga is a one-week educational sports camp for children and teens who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind and is a project of the Saratoga Springs Lions.

Camp Abilities Saratoga started in 2014 after gaining inspiration from the Camp Abilities in Brockport, New York founded by Lauren Lieberman. The primary objective of Camp Abilities Saratoga is to empower children and teens who are visually and hearing impaired to be physically active by way of a series of sports activities that have been professionally adapted to their abilities. Another objective of the camp is to provide "real life" hands-on experience for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing the field of physical education, as well as active teaching professionals from the field of adaptive sports.

The Board of Directors and all those involved in Camp Abilities Saratoga thank all of our sponsors, donors and volunteers for helping to make this camp a reality!

For more information visit: www.CampAbilitiesSaratoga.org or you may reach us at: Camp Abilities Saratoga PO Box 601 Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 info@campabilitiessaratoga.org