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## **A Summer Camp That's All Talk** *Children with Cleft Lip and Palate Participate in Unique Speech Camp at Barrow*

It's the first summer camp most of these 12 Valley children have ever attended — and it's designed just for them. At this camp, no one teases them about the way they talk or about the scars on their faces. Instead, the Happy Campers Speech Camp at Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center makes these children feel safe and, best of all, normal.

The Barrow Children's Cleft and Craniofacial Center is providing intense speech therapy camp — disguised as fun activities — to children, ages 5 to 11, with severe speech problems due to cleft lip and palate. The two week camp includes playtime, a creative project or craft, sport/motor activity time, board games, speech drills, and a session with a psychologist to discuss issues like teasing and self-esteem.

"I've watched kids born with craniofacial disorders grow up. I've seen how long it takes them to make progress," says Deborah Leach, speech pathologist at Barrow. "And I thought, if I could just have these kids for a couple of weeks, I think I could make a lot of progress with their speech."

The children are equally excited about the first-year camp, which is being funded by St. Joseph's Foundation board member Shelby Butterfield. Some are waking their parents up at 5 a.m. to go to camp, and others don't want to leave at the end of the day. They're especially interested in the tickets they earn throughout the day for "good speech"— tickets they collect and use to buy toys.

Cleft lip and palate is the most common birth defect of the face. It occurs when the gaps in an unborn child's lips and palate do not close normally. A child with cleft lip and palate typically undergoes six to 10 surgeries, along with speech therapy and psychological counseling, between birth and 21 years of age. Eating problems, speech difficulties, and self-esteem issues are common among these children.

The Barrow Children's Cleft and Craniofacial Center is the only accredited craniofacial program in the Valley and the only program of its kind in the Southwest. The center cares for approximately 6,400 children, up to age 21. Patients come from throughout Arizona, as well as from parts of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas.

— St. Joseph's —