



New Jersey surfers' goodwill & the iMatter Surf Camp for Children w/ Autism

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Mike Reynolds



Community Options-iMatter Surf Camp

Despite being fully enmeshed within the New Jersey surf scene for 30 years now, I'm still learning new things every day about our surfers' collective character, inner-strength and fortitude.

Hopefully, you've noticed the stories of goodwill interspersed throughout the profiles, session recaps and observations I've written about here in my column. There's an abundance of good people and hearts in our little community and I stepped back this morning and took stock of all that we've done for each other and our neighboring states. Even just since January, surfers have rallied repeatedly around events that benefit all forms of cancer, autism, suicide prevention, amyloidosis and many other worthwhile causes. It takes a lot to put these events together (staff, volunteers, resources, marketing, food, medical care...) and only an area with a lot of love to give could answer the call every time. And we do. Good on ya' all.

There's always events we can get involved in and I wanted to profile another here today. A dear, childhood friend of mine is heavily involved in Community Options (www.comop.org), a national nonprofit organization that has been developing supports for people with developmental disabilities since 1989. Believing in the "freedom of all people to experience the highest degree of self-determination," the group "provides housing, support services and advocacy assistance to help empower people with disabilities." They are a strong, long-standing organization that does tremendous good for many, many people.

On August 14th, Community Options will hold the 4th Annual iMatter Surf Camp for Children with Autism at Cupsogue Beach in Westhampton, NY from 9:30-4:00 (Okay, so it's not in NJ, but my buddy's chapter that organizes this event is based here and it's an awesome cause). The camp is free and the organization provides lunch to all that participate. This year, registration will begin at 9:30am. Soon after, children will be paired up with their volunteers for the day and start surfing. The children are assigned a one-to-one volunteer who they surf tandem with all day. With a quick break for lunch, the children are always eager to get back in the water and surf until the day wraps up between 4pm-5pm. Get on out to enjoy the event, volunteer or just donate to a great organization. I can personally attest via my good buddy, Tom, that Community Options is the real deal and well worth your time and dollars.

The mantra of one of the in-kind sponsors, Global Surf Industries, sums it up best: "Life is better when you surf." The only thing I'd add is when you're helping others as well.

For more information about the camp, please visit www.comop.org/surf_camp or you can fan the camp on Facebook.

Cheers everyone,

-Mike

www.nj.com/surfwriter

mike@survivingbill.com

Twitter: @ColdWaterMike

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