The Mother of Camp (One) Heartland

August 19, 2010 By Shawn Decker

Received the news from Bob Bowers via One Heartland founder Neil Willenson. I have a friend who went to One Heartland- a camp for children with HIV- several years ago... it was the first time he spoke with other youths who were positive and it was a transformative experience for him. My thoughts go out to the Wolff family and Neil, as well as my thanks for standing up for kids with HIV. - Shawn

-- for immediate release ---

Dawn Wolff, "Mother of Camp Heartland," Dies: Is remembered for a life dedicated to those living with HIV/AIDS Milwaukee (August 17, 2010) - Dawn Wolff, the "mother of Camp Heartland," died on Monday, August 16, 2010.

Wolff was the mother of Nile Sandeen, the boy whose HIV status caused uproar in Mequon, Wisconsin. After learning of Sandeen's struggle in 1991, Neil Willenson founded One Heartland, a camp for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Neil Willenson commented on Wolff's life yesterday, "Her willingness to speak openly about AIDS

back in 1990, when few did so, ultimately led to the creation of One Heartland. Without Dawn's courage, thousands of children and volunteers would never have experienced Camp Heartland. The genesis of my 20 year journey in the HIV fight - and that of so many others - was Dawn's desire to create a world that was far more accepting and understanding regarding HIV/AIDS. She was a powerful voice for acceptance and HIV education at a time when few women publicly disclosed their HIV status. She was a role model who was truly ahead of her time."

Wolff is survived by her parents Don and Jackie Wolff, her sons Nile and Sean Sandeen, a grandchild and many other family members.

"My mother spent her life working towards tolerance and acceptance of those living with HIV/AIDS in our community and communities across the country. If there was any message that she wants to come from her death it is the same message of education,

prevention, and love for the AIDS community. Just as she lived a life of hope we grieve and commend her to God with hope. She did not lose, AIDS did not win. To the contrary, AIDS, like death has no dominion over her," stated Nile Sandeen, Wolff's son who lives in St. Paul, Minnesota and is attending Luther Seminary.

Funeral details will be determined in the coming days.

One Heartland creates community, offers respite and builds lifelong skills by providing an accepting environment for children, youth and their families facing social isolation so that they may lead healthier and more fulfilling lives. Founded in 1993, as Camp Heartland, One Heartland provides the largest camping and care program in the nation for children affected by HIV/AIDS. *For more information, visit www.oneheartland.org or contact Neil Willenson (neil@oneheartland.org) or 414-272-1118 x21.*

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