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NEIGHBORS

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POOLED RESOURCES

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Stephonne Gassant, 17, held by Chris Martinez, swims in the pool at A.D. Barnes Park. Quadriplegic children from around the country participate in a camp sponsored by Miami Children's Hospital.

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CAMP MAKES A SPLASH

WEDNESDAY WAS "POOL DAY" AT A.D. BARNES PARK FOR A GROUP OF 40 KIDS ATTENDING MIAMI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL VENTILATION ASSISTED CHILDREN'S CENTER CAMP.

BY ELAINE DE VALLE
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Ventilators and respirators are not a typical sight at the A.D. Barnes Park pool, but on Wednesday the equipment was an integral part of the pool environment for an annual camp hosted by Miami Children's Hospital.

"We don't look at what they can't do. We find things they can do," Dr. Moises Simpser, director of pulmonology at Miami Children's, said of the 40 kids who splashed around in the water.

Simpser established and has run the volunteer camp for 22 years.

The operation takes dozens of volunteer nurses and pulmonary therapists from the hospital as well as 18 high school kids who donated their spring break time, Simpser said.

"They are pals with the children," Simpser said. "It makes a big difference because it's not adults providing medical care. It's just fun."

The Miami Children's Hospital Ventilation Assisted Children's Center Camp — the nation's first camp for ventilation-assisted children — provides camp activities for "technology dependent" children, said Cynthia Gutierrez-White, a hospital spokeswoman.



CHARLES TRAINOR JR./MIAMI HERALD STAFF

SPLASH TIME: Tyler Fauerbach, 15, is helped by his father Troy at the A.D. Barnes Park pool.

rez-White, a hospital spokeswoman.

The kids this year — who came from as far away as Chicago and California, as well as Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties — went sailing with Shake-A-Leg Miami, spent a day at Bayside

Marketplace, had a day at the beach, played carnival games, did arts and crafts, danced disco and played football with the North Miami Senior High team.

"Pool day is one of the most anticipated days of VACC Camp," Gutierrez-

White said.

Many campers — some of whom have spinal bifida or cerebral palsy — use wheelchairs. But with the assistance of the camp leaders and nurses, the children were able to float and play in the water.

"For many campers, VACC

Camp is the only time of the year they go in a pool," Gutierrez-White said of the outing at Barnes, 3401 SW 72nd Ave.

For one 15-year-old boy, it was his first time swimming, Simpser said.

"We have a new patient this year who had never been in the water. The parents never even take him out," Simpser said. "He is essentially in his house, which has become an ICU."

On Thursday, all the families got together at Rumor's on Old Cutler Road for some dinner and dancing.

"These children, they love to dance," Simpser said. "We didn't know they love music so much."

The Ortegan family from Chicago has attended the camp for four years.

"Of all the hardships we go through with my son, this is a blessing," said Mario Ortegan, whose 16-year-old is a quadriplegic on a ventilator through acute disseminated encephalomyelitis.

"You get the best of humanity. You get to see beautiful spirits, people that are helpful, people that are kind. You forget about all the trials and tribulations that we have to go through."

CORAL GABLES

Officials crack down on city credit cards

■ City officials are clamping down on charges to city-issued credit cards and the mayor asks for additional review of reports on a regular basis.

BY ELAINE DE VALLE
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Some of the Coral Gables city employees with city-issued Visas have been told to stop using them to charge coffee, doughnuts, deli platters

and pizza for regular meetings.

"People were abusing it," said Danilo Bedit, the city's chief procurement officer and coordinator of the purchasing card program that has come

under fire after a police major was disciplined for charging Christmas gifts and the lavish lunches of the city manager were reported.

"You can't use city funds to fund your own breakfast for a meeting you are going to have at your office anyway," Bedit said.

"If you have a longer meet-

ing like a workshop, and everyone is working through it, it's not a problem. But if I have a staff meeting every morning, I'm not going to supply them with doughnuts or bagels every morning."

The swipers who were chided include staffers in the information technology department, which has five

card-holders, and the city manager's office, Bedit said.

"[Information technology] was really the largest one that was doing that," he said.

While most of the \$237,000 in Visa charges by the IT department have been for

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