

# Outlook

## Unique summer camp



JANET DOOLEY/Big Bear Grizzly

**Michelangelo, 49, left, helps Mai, 14, during an archery session at transgender camp in Big Bear in July.**

## Transgender youth experience Big Bear camp

By Janet Dooley  
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**S**hark Bait, 24, lined up an archery shot as Michelangelo, 49, helped Mai, 14, put on a wrist guard at the archery range. All three attended the first free transgender youth camp in the nation at Camp Big Bear at the end of July. The youths participants' and counselors' camp nicknames are used in this story to protect their privacy.

Presented by the Laurel Foundation, the camp is based on traditional camp programs, yet caters to the physical health and mental well-being of youths ages 10 to 17 who are gender nonconforming or transgender. The camp provides trans youth an accepting environment with volunteer trans role models in an educational environment, said Margot Anderson, founder and CEO of the Laurel Foundation.

Madden, 17, said he is from a large conservative city with few trans people. "They support the L, the G and the B, but not the T," Madden said of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.

Madden felt safer at Camp Big Bear than at a previous camp experience. "I like that we all have something in common — that we're trans," he said.

The Children's Hospital Los Angeles is one of the supporters of the Laurel Foundation. Hospital board members told Anderson they wanted a mental health component to the camp's program. There are workshops as well as physical activities for the campers — know your trans rights, makeup 101, et cetera.

The camp has several sponsors including Vons/Safeway, Wells Fargo, Nordstrom and more. One sponsor, MAC Cosmetics, was visiting the camp to give makeup demonstrations, Anderson told the group waiting their turn at archery.



**Sam, 16, jumps for the trapeze on the high ropes course.**

"Oh, good," Madden said. "I want to learn how to make a strong jaw line, and I need concealer because I don't sleep."

At the high ropes course among the trees at the camp, Sam, 16, easily climbed a tree to make the leap to the trapeze bar. He's leaped about five times already this week, he said. Sam's passion is floor gymnastics, and his goal is to make it to the Olympics.

Seventy-five percent of the Laurel Foundation camp staff is trans. "They're great role models — they've been through all of this," Anderson said. "We had two counselors that were in the military."

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## Big Bear Planner

### Aug. 9

Big Bear Lake Quilters Guild, 10 a.m., Patchworks Quilt Shop, 42124H Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, [www.bigbearlakequiltersguild.com](http://www.bigbearlakequiltersguild.com).

### Aug. 10

Big Bear Valley Astronomical Society meeting, 6 p.m., Denny's Restaurant, 41196 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 760-265-1938, [www.bearvalleyastronomers.org](http://www.bearvalleyastronomers.org).

Big Bear Valley Community Organizations Active in Disaster, 6:30 p.m., First Baptist Church, 41960 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-214-6990.

### Aug. 17

AARP luncheon meeting, noon, Sizzler Restaurant, 42137 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-585-5058.

Sierra Club meeting, 6:30 p.m., Big Bear Discovery Center, 40971 North Shore Drive, Fawnskin, [www.sierraclub.org/san-gorgonio/big-bear](http://www.sierraclub.org/san-gorgonio/big-bear).

### Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays

Senior luncheon, noon to 1:30 p.m., reservations required, for age 55 and older, Big Bear Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-584-0323, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Tuesdays

Ballroom dancing, 6:30 p.m., Big Bear Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-584-0323, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Tuesdays and Fridays

Hatha Yoga with Helaine, 5 p.m., Big Bear

Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-709-5940, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Wednesdays

Al-Anon/Friends and Families of Alcoholics meeting, noon to 1:30 p.m., nondenominational and confidential, Community Church Big Bear, 40926 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-824-1516, [www.iealanon.org](http://www.iealanon.org).

Line dancing, 6 p.m. beginners class, 6:45 and 8:45 p.m. intermediate class, Convention Center at Big Bear Lake, 42900 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-585-3000, [bigbearevents.com](http://bigbearevents.com).

Beginning salsa dancing, 7 p.m., Big Bear Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-584-0323, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Wednesdays and Fridays

Silver Sneakers aerobics class, 9:30 a.m., Big Bear Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-584-0323, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Thursdays

Bingo, noon to 4 p.m., age 18 and older, Big Bear Valley Senior Center, 42651 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-584-0323, [www.bigbearparks.com](http://www.bigbearparks.com).

### Fridays

Ballroom Dance Class, 6 p.m., advanced class, 5 p.m., Convention Center at Big Bear Lake, 42900 Big Bear Blvd., Big Bear Lake, 909-585-3000.

Bingo night, 7 p.m., Big Bear Elks Lodge, 40611 Village Drive, Big Bear Lake, 909-866-3357.

# Buckaroo Ball features country-western theme

Put on your country duds, cowboy boots and brush up on your two-step. The Bear Valley Center for Spiritual Enrichment hosts a Buckaroo Ball in the garden at the Inn at Fawnskin Sunday, Aug. 13. The event is at 4 p.m.

The Buckaroo Ball features a five-piece country band, The Runnin' Kind. There will be a dance floor just so guests can get in the swing.

Innkeeper, Nancy Walker prepares a buffet of pulled pork, cranberry cole slaw and Cowboy Bob's famous baked beans. After dinner, platters of homemade chocolates are delivered to the tables.

There is a no-host wine bar where guests can purchase wine or beer to

go with their meal. Live and silent auctions are included in the event, as well as an opportunity drawing. Tickets are \$65 if purchased in advance by calling The Inn at Fawnskin at 909-866-3200. If the event doesn't sell out, tickets are \$75 at the door. But don't wait. This event sells out early.

The Bear Valley Center for Spiritual Enrichment is an all-inclusive community, dedicated to healing and the revealing of truth through service and education, supporting all members and guests for the highest good of all. The Center is at 578 Bonanza Trail, Big Bear Lake.

The Inn at Fawnskin is at 880 Canyon Road, Fawnskin.

## McGeehan at Women's Connection luncheon

Big Bear Lake Women's Connection welcomes former Big Bear resident Jen McGeehan as the guest speaker Aug. 23 at the Aloha Luncheon.

McGeehan describes the adventure and challenge of living in unconventional housing in Hawaii in her presentation "My Year in a Yurt." McGeehan will also present a special feature, Travel to Paradise Quiz.

The luncheon begins at 11:30 a.m. at The Lodge at Big Bear Lake, a Holiday Inn resort. Attendees are encouraged to wear Hawaiian attire.

Cost for the luncheon is \$18. Reservations are required by Friday, Aug. 18.

All first-time guests to the Women's Connection luncheon each month receive a half-off coupon for their next luncheon. Call Chris Ramirez, 949-246-1053 for reservations.

The Lodge at Big Bear Lake is at 40650 Village Drive in Big Bear Lake.

Women's Connection is affiliated with the nonprofit organization Stonecroft, which has been reaching out to women for 79 years. For more information go to [www.stonecroft.org](http://www.stonecroft.org) on the internet.



Jen McGeehan

# Camp focuses on community

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They were just so emotionally distraught about the whole thing (the military transgender ban), they just felt they weren't in the emotional space to come up to camp, which is unfortunate."

Camp Big Bear was Isaac's first experience as an overnight counselor. Isaac, 23, started his trans journey at age 13. He oversaw a cabin of 15- and 16-year-old boys.

"Trans camp is different than just general camp," Isaac said. "A lot of these kids don't necessarily have a space where they can talk about a lot things that are trans-specific with mentors that are older than them — so they're navigating that. But it is camp. They are just kids. They are so much more than just being trans. In the ages that we get, trans is a big part of their life."

Anderson founded the Laurel Foundation 25 years ago to sponsor camps for children infected or affected

by HIV/AIDS. With the instance of HIV/AIDS infections in children declining, the organization expanded its mission to provide support for transgender and other at-risk youth populations.

The foundation annually helps more than 500 low-income, at-risk youths living primarily in Southern California.

The self-harm rate among trans people is 41 percent. It's 57 percent when they do not have support or acceptance at home, Anderson said. Her hope is that the campers will not feel so isolated and will now have a community of friends for life.

"I'm just so happy we can help," Anderson said. "Just listening to the kids over the past couple of days — how much they've grown, and we've empowered them — has been great. That's what they need. They don't always have that back at home."

For more information, visit [www.laurel-foundation.org](http://www.laurel-foundation.org).

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