

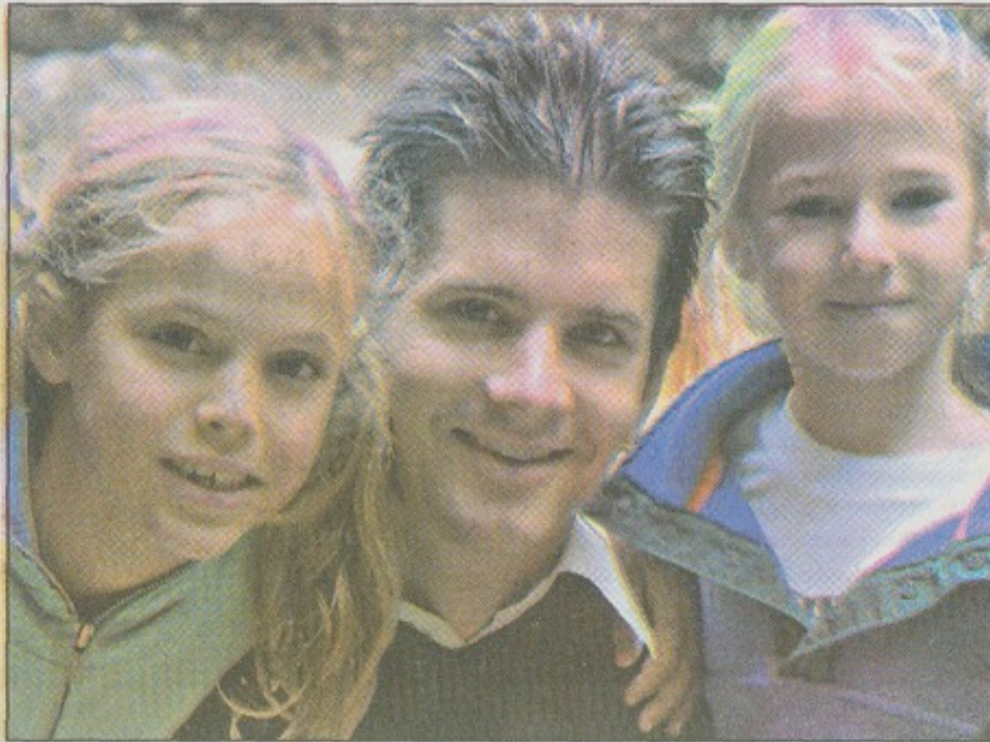
Camp Doodles Turns Kids and Parents into "Happy Campers"

It's an annual phenomenon. When March approaches parents everywhere begin to have thoughts about summer - particularly *what will the kids do all summer long?* Here in Mill Valley, hundreds of families answer that daunting question in two words - Camp Doodles.

Based at the Strawberry Point School in Mill Valley for the past three years, Camp Doodles has become a "home away from home" for children entering grades K to 6. This means Camp Doodles provides an environment that is safe, fun and caring - a very appealing and comforting thought especially for working parents who must find the right place for young children when school is out. For kids, safe and caring is nice, but the important thing is FUN!

The great thing about Camp Doodles is *it's the best of all worlds - a nurturing and respectful environment where children learn and thrive AND a totally fun-filled activity center that offers more fun and games than most kids can imagine.* As the slogan goes, "It's not just a camp...it's an adventure!"

In order to create the best camp environment, founder and director David Hughes drew upon his own favorite experiences as a camper, a young counselor in training and many years as director for the Mill Valley Parks and Recreation



David Hughes, (center) founder/director of Camp Doodles participates in "Crazy Hair Day" with two delighted campers.

Department winter and summer camp programs. He also incorporated feedback from parents, friends and children to lay the foundation for a truly unique camp program.

"I think I knew from the time I was very

young that I wanted to have my own camp," said Hughes. "I really liked camp as a kid, so much so that it seemed natural that I would become a counselor when I was old enough. There was something about being

in a fun, friendly and very active environment that appealed to me. Plus, I really enjoy being around kids. I like their energy, their inquisitiveness and enthusiasm. It makes me look forward to summer and going to work each day."

Hughes' older brother Jeremy encouraged him to start his own camp, and helped set things in motion by offering financial support and serving as an advisor. Both agreed from the beginning if they were going to do this, they would do it right. Along with hiring a caring energetic staff, finding a location like Strawberry Point School that has huge grassy fields, beautiful shoreline trails and ample playground facilities and creating very positive programs, the decision was made to seek accreditation from American Camping Association (ACA).

"We voluntarily subjected Camp Doodles for evaluation by the ACA," explained Hughes. "This means we had to meet approximately 300 standards for health, safety and program management. It is a very intense process to go through, but I am proud to say that we passed with flying colors. In this business, accreditation is like the Good Housekeeping stamp of approval. It is earned and a symbol of excellence.

See DOODLES, Page 9