

# Teacher mixes love for kids and safety into local camp

## *Spirit of* **MILL VALLEY**

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EDITOR

David “Doodles” Hughes talks about summer camp with enthusiasm you wouldn’t expect from a 25-year-old.

“I’d say the best day is ice cream day, which falls on a dress-up day,” said Hughes. “There’s nothing better than walking into the ice cream shop with a group of campers dressed up like pirates and singing camp songs.”

Hughes, who grew up in Mill Valley, said he has always loved working with children and spent most of his childhood summers in camp, so it was fitting that he start his own camp with his brother Jeremy “Blinky” Hughes in 2001.

Hughes and his brother decided to open their summer day camp in town because the two “really feel closely connected to Mill Valley,” Hughes said. “We wanted to make the best possible program — a home away from home.”

Camp Doodles is now a home to 120 students grades K-6 during summer’s daylight hours. (“Doodles” is Hughes’ nickname, given to him by his



**David Hughes**

*photo courtesy of Hughes*

brother when the two were children.)

The camp, based at Strawberry Point School overlooking Richardson Bay, is gaining a reputation for combining traditional camp fun and new technology.

Instead of just dropping their children off at camp in the morning, parents have to go inside and enter their child’s name and an identification number into the camp’s computer system. The computer then marks the child’s attendance and makes note of any allergies or medication camp counselors should know about.

“We take safety, health and security seriously. And I think that’s why parents feel so com-

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# COMMUNITY

## Hughes

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fortable leaving their children with us," said Hughes.

Hughes has worked at various summer camps in Marin County for more than 12 years and serves as a liaison between the local Red Cross and Emergency Preparedness Committee. He went to great pains to have the camp accredited by the American Camping Association and it is now one of only five camps in Marin County with ACA accreditation.

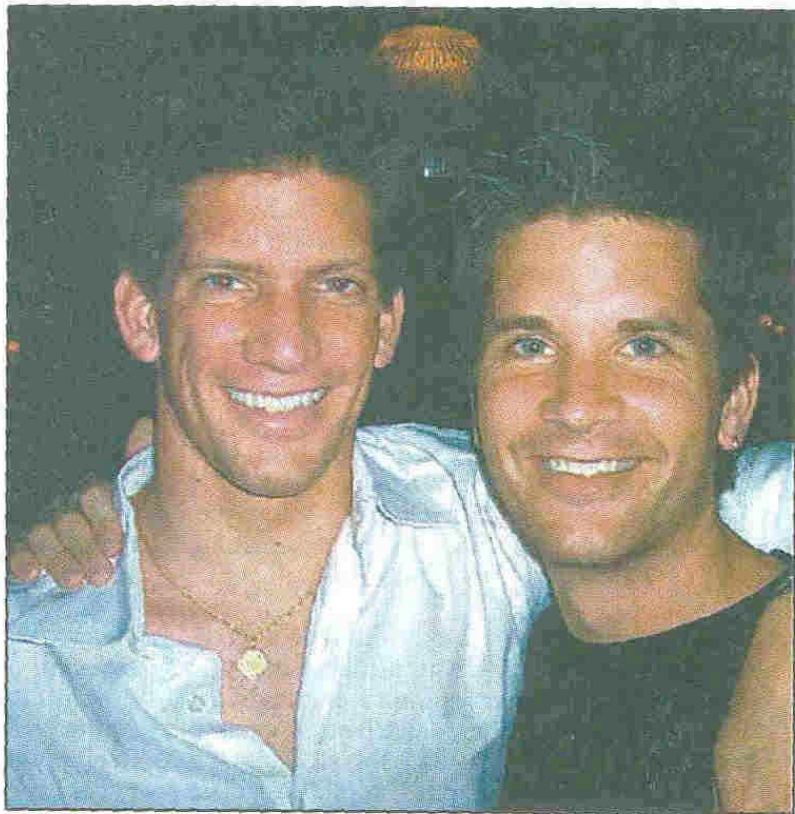
"It's so important to be to be proactive across the board," said Hughes of the accreditation and computer system. "And I can rest assured the children really are safe and secure. It makes camp more fun for everyone."

Hughes says being a camp director is so rewarding, he doesn't need to set an alarm clock. "I don't set it because I wake up ready for the day and with enough energy for three people," said Hughes. "I can't wait to get to camp and see students come running in dressed up for Crazy Hair Day or in some costume," said Hughes.

Hughes was ambivalent about working with his brother at first but said the two soon learned they shared a similar vision. "I was skeptical about directing the camp with him because I kept remembering how he used to throw my Legos around when we were kids, but we really share the same passion for learning and caring for kids," said Hughes.

The brothers are interested in starting a Camp Doodles clothing line and would like to open up another camp in Marin County.

Hughes was born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1979. He moved with his mother, Bettina Hughes, and brother to Switzerland and the South of France and finally



**Brothers Jeremy (left) and David Hughes worked together to create a camp where, according to David, "kids can have the best summer ever."**

*Photo courtesy of David Hughes*

relocated to Mill Valley when Hughes was 5 years old.

Hughes spent the remainder of his childhood at Park School and Mill Valley Middle School and attended boarding school in Northfield, Massachusetts. The summers of his youth were filled with camps and travel with his family.

"I remember getting on my bike, riding it down by Boyle Creek, getting a slice of pizza at Stefano's and checking out all the gadgets at Sake's Alive with my buddies," said Hughes of his childhood after-school routine.

"Mill Valley brought me up and supported me when I was growing so it feels good to give back," said Hughes. "I've always loved working with kids, and I have a lot of energy and enthusiasm for anything and everything."

Hughes earned a bachelor's degree at Sonoma State University and in 2002 was

invited to teach English at the prestigious Lycee Michel Montaigne in Bordeaux, France.

After his time in Bordeaux, Hughes graduated from the teacher credential program at Dominican University and was hired as a third-grade teacher at Larkspur's Marin Primary School.

"I spend most of the year trying to balance my work as a teacher and planning camp," said Hughes.

Hughes is an emergency medical technician, Red Cross certified in first aid and CPR and a certified babysitter trainer.

In his off time Hughes might be spotted hiking with his Jack Russell terrier named Bengie, traveling with his family or grabbing a cup of coffee at the Depot.

For more information on Camp Doodles, visit [www.campdoodles.com](http://www.campdoodles.com).