



Shawnda Gidel, 18, plays Nintendo Wii bowling while at Active Day in Lafayette.

## Active Day summer camp assists young adults with special needs

By TAYA FLORES • [tflores@jconline.com](mailto:tflores@jconline.com) • May 5, 2009

Shawnda Gidel is looking forward to summer camp this year.

It will be the first time the 18-year-old is attending camp by herself because her physical and mental disabilities require special care.

"This is going to open the door for her to make new friends and learn new things," said her grandmother and primary caregiver, Donna McWhorter. "We have nothing like that in Carroll County."

Gidel will be participating in the Active Day summer camp for young adults with mental and physical disabilities. The camp, which takes place May 18 through Aug. 14, is designed to offer disabled students health services during summer break.

"I hope everyone has fun," said Peggy O'Maley, Lafayette center director. "I hope the young adults feel empowered."

O'Maley said the students will learn survival skills such as microwave cooking at the Active Day center, which typically offers health services to the elderly and disabled adults.

"All of these skills are very helpful skills not only for school but (they) will be good job skills," O'Maley said. "Some people will go on living on their own in an apartment, but even if they don't, they will be able to help out at home."

The students will also learn consumer skills to help them become more independent.

For example, one of the projects will have the students bringing in magazines and pick out the items they would like to buy and then explain how to purchase them.

O'Maley said the students will take weekly field trips to restaurants, to shop or even swim if they are interested.

She said the center is working with them to help them overcome their limitations.

Gidel has the same interests as most teenagers her age.

She enjoys playing the Wii and likes listening to country pop stars Taylor Swift and Carrie Underwood.

But having cerebral palsy, seizures and developmental delays, makes her fairly dependent on caregivers.

"It's a 24-7 job," McWhorter said. "It's not something I take lightly, I try to keep her on track. Our goal is individual living."

Home health aides help Gidel shower and write her name and Gidel can dress herself and has been riding a specially-adapted bike on her own.

McWhorter said she doesn't ever want anyone to discourage Gidel from trying and tries to motivate her as much as possible.

"Never tell any of my children that they can't do anything," she said.

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### **MORE INFORMATION**

The Active Day camp for disabled young adults is May 18 through Aug. 14 at the Lafayette center, at 3922 Mezzanine Drive.

The camp is for young adults ages 16 and older with mental and physical disabilities. The cost is \$60 a day and \$12 an hour for before and after care and may be covered by Medicaid waiver for young adults 18 and older who are already receiving those funds.

Registration is ongoing and for more information, call (765) 446-7270.