

"Autism on the Seas" is Amazing

Sunday, November 09, 2008

MySpace Blog Entry... by Heather Hawk

My son and I just got back from an absolutely amazing vacation with "Autism on the Seas" and would like to share our experience. I know as parents of a special needs child, that we can be hesitant about trying a new activity or taking a new adventure. This trip has shown me that there is so much more my son and I can do together.

As a single parent I was very scared to take my son alone on a cruise. There were so many "what ifs" going through my head and Mike did a great job of addressing my million questions before the cruise. This was my first cruise ever, so I had no idea what to expect.

My son has many fears and I was so happy I actually got him on the ship. When we went to our room there was Autism on the Seas sign on the door and my son's eyes just lit up. He saw the daily schedule and was ready to go.

On every cruise it is mandatory to do a muster drill. My son hates loud noises and crowds. We did our own drill which was more like a meet and greet party for the kids. They did a great job of keeping the kids entertained even with the noise and excitement outside.

The private dining was great. Since the families ate in our own dining room, my son saw it as a great event three times a day. He wanted to eat in the dining room every meal to see his new friends. On a port day we had lunch at the buffet and my son was able to sit with Mike and Ryan. He saw this as his special time with the guys.

In Grand Cayman we tendered in and this is something my son did not want to do. Jamie went with us and made it fun for him. By the end of the trip, my son wanted to do anything to hang out with Jamie and Ryan. The private dance parties were a lot of fun. The kids were able to be themselves and everyone just had a goofy fun time. Adventure Oceans (the kids program) was very accommodating and our private time really made the kids feel more at home. The bridge tour was really neat and made the kids feel so special.

On the last evening of the cruise we went to the farewell show. My son did not want to go, but went reluctantly. Part way through the show he decided he wanted to sit with Mike, Jamie and Ryan since it was the last night. They obliged and he loved the show. Once the show was over he really understood we were leaving. He broke down crying because he did not want to leave. The kid who really didn't want to go on the cruise, now did not want to leave. They helped console him and then I took him swimming with another family.

On the last morning we had breakfast together. My son was overtired and upset that we were leaving. They hung out with all the families and we talked and relaxed while we were getting ready to disembark. It was such a blast that We had such a great time that my son has decided that he is willing to give up all vacations (even Disney) to go on another cruise. We are going again on January 15, 2009. For more information, please check out www.autismontheseas.com (and let them know Heather sent you) or e-mail me directly with any questions.

Hope to see you there,
Heather