Website Case Study – Camp Mak-A-Dream – Emily Saunders

Background

Camp Mak-A-Dream is a national nonprofit cancer survivor camp. To start the term survivor in this context is anyone from the date of their diagnosis forward. This camp serves children and young adults with a safe, inclusive space where they can bond while participating in camp programming. Each camp session lasts a week and is designated by the age of the camper. Kid’s camp is for 5-12 year olds, teen camp is for 12-18 year olds, and young adult camp is for 18-40 year olds. The camp programming includes studio art and crafts, high ropes course, support group sessions and workshops on how to advocate for yourself as a patient. In psychosocial studies these camps have proven to improve the quality of life for survivors with lasting memories of comradeery and friendship. Most of these camps are free for campers and operate on donations and fundraisers.

Overall Assessment of Web Design-

The overall design layout of the home page for Camp Mak-A-Dream is well designed and sits within the frame of the browser window without unnecessary scrolling. The cheerful photos of campers and cheerful colors make the website very personable. However, on subsequent pages side navigation pops up and the frame does not fit within the browser window, so unnecessary scrolling is necessary for the user to do when attempting to read only one to two sentences of the text.

The layout on the home page with the sub-navigation at the top and not the side is a smarter use of space and keeps the lower area more open for the text and photos below. Recently they have added short videos in place of some of the photos on the pages, which is a smart way to add more content without adding to the spatial layout. Overall, the design placement of the text and photo on each page is a thoughtful and consistent one.

Navigation – Functionality – Content

The home pages sub-navigation bar has drop down menus. There are five main title headers: Programs, Facilities, Camp Community, Events, and Support Camp. The drop down menus are hard for the user as they are small in font and tightly crowded together. Two of the titles have long drop down menu options and the other three have only a couple of menu options.
The menu options under each title are not well organized. For example two of the main titles do not relate to the main purpose of the camp, which is to serve campers and receive funds for camp. Under the title Events there are fundraising events, not events for the campers, which is confusing for the user. Also, under Facilities there is ‘how to rent the camp’ for other events, such as weddings, which is also confusing. I would place all of these non-camp related menu options under a main title heading titled Fundraising Events and delete the Events and Facilities main titles altogether.

The Camp Community drop down menu also has unrelated items on its menu. The history, staff, board and volunteer information makes sense here; however the photo gallery does not as it holds images of the kids and programs and would be better utilized under the Program title menu.

The Camp title drop down menu is one good example of an organized, easy to understand menu. It has kid, teen and young adult camp information followed by a calendar of the summer sessions designated for each age range. It is easy to access and easy to understand.

**Prescription** –

I suggest the website should not have a left side sub-navigation bar. It takes up too much space and is a repeat of the drop down menu options. Once the side navigation is eliminated the text box and photo area will have more room and all of the information will fit within the frame of the browser window, eliminating unnecessary scrolling to see one or two lines of text followed by empty space.

The photos of campers, the color scheme and contact information on every page makes the site very personable. However, the main titles should be changes to: Programs, Camp Community, Fundraiser Events and Support Camp. This way all of the fundraising events can be placed together and not mistaken for events for the campers. I also suggest the Donate Now button be placed on more than just the home page.

The recent addition of the videos in place of some of the photos is a good idea for adding content; however the videos themselves are amaturely produced. The lighting in the videos is far too dark and the individuals interviewed are in shadow. This low production quality brings down the overall professional look of the site. I suggest they replace the videos with the photos and re-produce the videos at a professional level. The
website overall, the use of layout, color, photos, logo, and font is very professional. With a little tweaking of the titles and where the information is housed in the drop down menu, along with eliminating side navigation to free up space, I believe this site could live up to its full potential.