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CRADLE BEACH

Cable company gives campers a boost

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Craig Donatelli loves James Bond movies and Cradle Beach Camp. Now, thanks to a donation from Time Warner Cable, he can enjoy both at the same time.

Time Warner on Tuesday announced the beginning of a five-year partnership with Cradle Beach, the Angola camp for disabled and disadvantaged children.

As part of the deal, Time Warner is revamping a cabin to create the Time Warner Cable Digital Den, a place where campers can watch digital cable or movies and surf the Web via high-speed Internet. In addition, Time Warner is sending 25 children to 10-day sessions at the camp.

Donatelli, 19, visited the camp three times during his early-teen years and is returning this year to work with the youngest campers as an apprentice leader. Donatelli, from Hamburg, has Down syndrome.

"I know I miss Cradle Beach, . he said.

His mother, Joyce, said he tells her, "Cradle Beach is in my heart..

In the past, Donatelli said, he joined campers in Cradle Beach's treehouse during rainstorms, but his face lighted up as he excitedly discussed his favorite movies and the chance to watch them at camp.

Gordon Harp, president of Time Warner's Buffalo division, hopes the Digital Den will serve as a place to escape summer rain or heat.

He said the partnership with Cradle Beach began after Time Warner interviewed 20 Western New York charitable organizations and chose Cradle Beach because of its local focus and its alignment with Time Warner's priorities of supporting children, education and the arts.

"They basically worked with us as far as how we could help support them outside of just basically providing money and sending kids to camp, . he said.

Time Warner's first priority is to clean, paint and wire the cabin. Company officials said they will introduce new furniture and further technology throughout the next five years.

Cara Stillman, Cradle Beach executive director, said the partnership aligns with the cause the camp has championed since 1888.

"We still have children who need and deserve experiences that other kids just take for granted, . she said, "and we still have adults who will do whatever it takes to help them..

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Charles Lewis/Buffalo News
Veteran Cradle Beach camper Craig Donatelli, left, hoists a hefty check with Gordon Harp, president of Time Warner Cable's Buffalo division; Cara Stillman, Cradle Beach executive director; and Joseph LaLonde, chairman of the camp's board.