

# SUNDAY

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## Owen Wilson

Actor talks about being the slacker in 'You, Me and Dupree' **U**

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WEATHER



Slightly cooler  
Highs: 98-101  
Lows: 63-67  
Air quality: Unhealthy

For details, see back of Viewpoint

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SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2006

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## LOCAL

# This summer, Kammie's a leader

She doesn't need her eyesight to see the truth, Kammie Dibble says.

"At school, I know I'm looked down at, but here I'm looked up to," said the 15-year-old, legally blind Thousand Oaks girl. "That's why we love this place."

"This place" is Camp Bloomfield, the Junior Blind of America summer camp in Malibu, where more than 200 blind and visually impaired children ages 5 to 12 gathered this weekend with their sighted buddies to take part in the camp's 11th annual Summer Games.

This is Kammie's payback year — the summer she gets to say thanks for all the camps she attended as the little girl who needed a counselor to help her — an older kid who made her feel important and looked up to.

This year, she's that older kid. "I'm a counselor-in-training this year," she said Friday, smiling anxiously as her mother, Kathleen Dibble, dropped her off at camp.

Kammie, who wants to teach visually impaired students one day, can see shapes and large objects — just enough to be able to help a young camper with no sight get ready to compete in the track and field, archery and aquatics events

with a sighted buddy.

"I'll help them get dressed in the morning, help them brush their teeth — things like that," she said. "I'm in their position, being blind, but I can see enough to figure out what clothes match."

She'll also be working in the camp's arts and crafts tent, helping the counselors there, said camp director Frank Cardenas.

"It's inspiring for all of us when an older camper like Kammie comes back to train to become a counselor," he said.

"No one knows these kids better than they do. How to make them feel important and learn to be independent."

It cuts both ways, says Kathy Dibble. For her daughter, the two weeks she spends at Camp Bloomfield is the highlight of her summer.

"Like a lot of kids with disabilities, Kammie doesn't have a huge amount of friends at home, so the kids she meets here every summer have become her best friends," Kathy said.

"Most kids have sleepovers, go to the movies with their friends, or hang out with them at the mall. Not our kids.

"Camp Bloomfield is their chance to hang out together and be an

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Junior Blind of America, contact Lauri Gavel at (323) 295-4555, ext. 225, or e-mail her at [lgavel@juniorblind.org](mailto:lgavel@juniorblind.org).

independent kid. Without this camp, they'd be lost and lonely this summer."

Teaching independence is one of the main reasons this nonprofit organization, formed in 1953, exists, says Miki Jordar, president of Junior Blind of America.

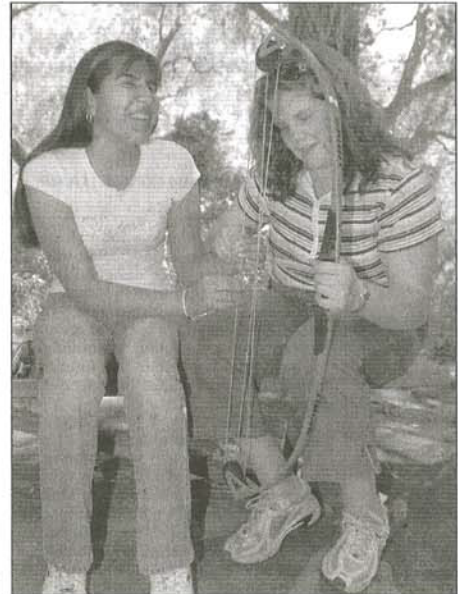
"These Summer Games are an important way we accomplish our mission of helping our students develop critical life skills and achieve as much independence as possible," she said.

So as Kathy Dibble pulled away in her car Friday after dropping her daughter off at camp, Kammie sat on a fence smiling and laughing with Laura Gonzalez, an old friend from previous camps.

Kammie helped Laura, who is totally blind, put her fingers on a bow in the right place to shoot a rubber-tipped arrow at one of the balloons set up yards away.

It traveled only a few feet before falling to the ground, but the girls didn't mind. They were too busy having fun.

Back with the Junior Blind of



Kammie Dibble, 15, right, shows Laura Gonzalez, 15, how to position her fingers to shoot an arrow from a bow at Camp Bloomfield in Malibu. Kammie, a Thousand Oaks resident, is training to be a camp counselor.

Tina Burch  
Staff Photographer

America for another summer camp where blind and visually impaired children hang out and get a chance to just be kids.

Like Kammie says, they don't need their eyesight to see the truth about Camp Bloomfield.

Nobody is looking down at them here — only up.

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