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Dear NAN Coordinators,

Firstly let me extend to you an enthusiastic welcome to this year's Network Conference. We are working hard to organise an informative and enjoyable conference and look forward to seeing you here in October.

As some of you may be aware my experience and passion has led me to become an advocate for Juvenile Arthritis and self management. Through living with this disease I am very aware that isolation and a lack of understanding are two of the greatest hurdles for living a positive and productive life with this condition. As a result of this I have been involved in coordinating camps for children with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) in Australia for over 20 years.

Currently Arthritis Australia hosts three camps, two of which occur during the first week of October, one on the West coast and one on the East. These camps are for children aged 7-17 years. The main aims of which are to encourage self management with an improvement in disease knowledge, but most of all, provide a safe and relaxed environment where kids can just be kids, and have a whole lot of fun.

In Australia we facilitate these camps with the assistance of young leaders. These are a combination of health professional students and young adults with arthritis who understand the needs of children with JIA. Over the years we have developed a training program for these young leaders which gives them skills in leadership that they are able to utilise in all aspects of their life. It is this program we wish to share with other countries.

What I propose under the Bone and Joint Decade Banner, with support from Arthritis Australia and its affiliates Arthritis New South Wales and Arthritis Western Australia, is to invite some exceptional young people aged 21-35 years who would like to come to Australia to learn how we put these camps together and what it means to be a leader for these most magnificent kids.

With the generous support of several Rotary Clubs in Australia we can secure the funding needed to bring international volunteer leaders to Australia to attend our camps. We propose to develop a relationship with Rotary Clubs in your country to facilitate the funding needed for these leaders to return to their home countries and start their own camps. This is a medium term goal.



This is by no means a simple plan. It will take a great deal of collaboration and the right people to make it happen. With this in mind I ask you to consider if you know a young person aged 21-35 with a form of Juvenile Arthritis. They must be reasonably active, be able to speak English adequately and have a passion for helping others.

They will need to be available from September 30 as the Camps will run during the first week of October and we would be most interested in having them available for our Network Conference from October 11-14 to not only report back on their experience, but gain expert knowledge from our Advocacy Skills Training during the conference. In between the Camp and the Conference we expect they will be hosted by a local Rotarian or Arthritis Foundation worker.

At this stage I need an expression of interest from someone who you think would be right for the role. If this is to work in the future we need someone who will use this opportunity as a starting point and not rest after they return home. The BJD has shown me how much can be done when we have realistic dreams, adequate funding and the right person for the job. Here is our chance to have the legacy of the BJD last well after 2010.

It can not be understated the power of making a sad child happy, and happy children make for an exciting future.

Please contact me for further information at [convenor@bjd.org.au](mailto:convenor@bjd.org.au)

Yours sincerely,

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