

Camp lets sick kids breathe, play a little easier



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Sorry folks, but it's time to get out of the comfort zone for a moment.

Think about breathing. About your last breath and your next. Pretty strange, huh?

It's strange because it's such a natural act. But for some people the act of breathing is a physical challenge that can't be accomplished without mechanical help. If you're a kid, the

challenge is compounded by the urge — really, the need — to play.

Five years ago, the staff at Miami Children's Hospital came up with the idea of having a summer camp for kids who must use

ventilators and respirators to help them breathe. The hospital treats these children at its Ventilation Assisted Children's Center.

The camp is at A.D. Barnes Park, Southwest 77th Avenue and Bird Road. The kids get the chance to swim, do arts and crafts, see children's theater, go to the science museum and for boat rides on Biscayne Bay.

Because the medical cost for a child on a ventilator is so high, the camp is free to the kids, their parents, brothers and sisters.

"We're promoting family growth and development and trying to help the children increase their self-esteem," said Zoe Arauz, program coordinator for the VACC camp.

So some sports people are helping out in their own way.