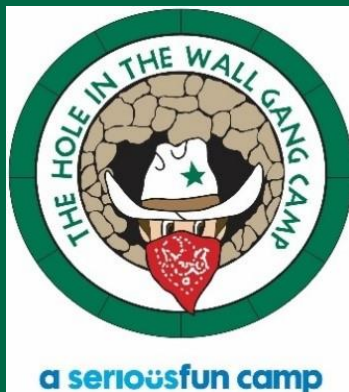




2019 Summer Camp Outcomes Report



What's the best thing about Camp?

“Everything, the counselors, the staff, making new friends, feeling free, being yourself, have fun, do what you feel you can't do at home. Like dancing in front of your friends. Laughing and smiling with those around you.

Laughing and giggling is the most amazing thing I've done this week.

Being silly and having fun. And the activities with your friends.”

(Session 2 camper)



BACKGROUND

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp (THITWGC) was founded by Paul Newman with one simple premise in mind – that every child, no matter their illness, could experience the transformational spirit and friendships that go hand-in-hand with camp. Through eight week-long residential summer camp sessions, Camp provides these experiences to children coping with cancer, blood disorders, hemophilia, sickle cell disease, metabolic diseases, and other rare and serious diseases, as well as their healthy siblings.

As part of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's ongoing efforts to document the impact of our work and to learn from systematically-collected evidence what areas to target for program improvement and camper support, we engaged in formal evaluations for the last seven years. This report reflects the 2019 evaluation.

Research and evaluation at Camp supports continuous innovation, promotes program quality, and ensures the safety, well-being and positive development of campers and families. Far from being a burden, campers shared much enthusiasm and gratitude for participating in the evaluation, often expressing the sentiment, “My voice gets to be heard by Camp.”

Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore campers' and parents/caregivers' perceptions of Camp, especially about making friends, trying new things, and medical care. We also asked campers about how much fun they had at structured programs. Both campers and parents/caregivers also provided answers to open-ended questions. We thank the hundreds of people who took time to answer our questions!

Special thanks to Colin O'Neill (Research and Evaluation Assistant) for his incredible help with data collection and analysis for this evaluation.

Methods

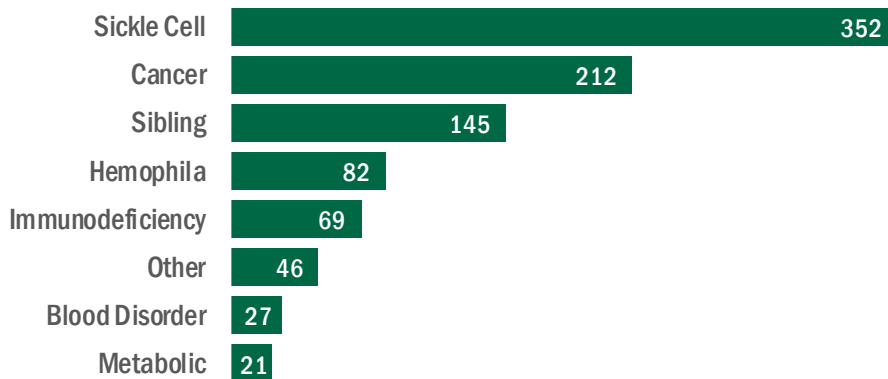
96% of parents and caregivers gave their children permission to participate in the evaluation. Evaluation participants completed the questionnaires on their last afternoon at Camp, using iPads with the iSurvey app. A collaborative approach toward scale creation included conversations and review with key program staff. Scale reliabilities were good, ranging from .883-.891, indicating that campers responded predictably to questions.

737 of 966 (76%) campers completed surveys. Participants aged 10 and older completed the six-item "Independence" scale (American Camp Association Camp Youth Outcomes Battery, 2011). Independence is an indicator of *thriving*, which is important for our campers.

401 of 787 (51%) parents/caregivers with emails completed surveys, including six who completed the survey via telephone. Surveys with only one question answered were deleted from the analysis, leaving 391 usable surveys. Parents/caregivers answered three questions about their children's independence and other outcomes of the camp experience, and medical care at Camp. Both campers and parents/caregivers answered open-ended questions about their experiences.

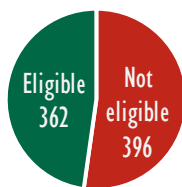
ABOUT OUR CAMPERS

966 children attended Camp this summer.

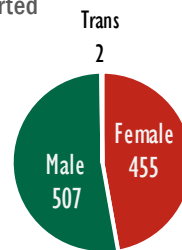


This does not include campers in the Leader-In-Training programs, the Hero's Journey® program, the Canoe Trip, or Barretstown programs.

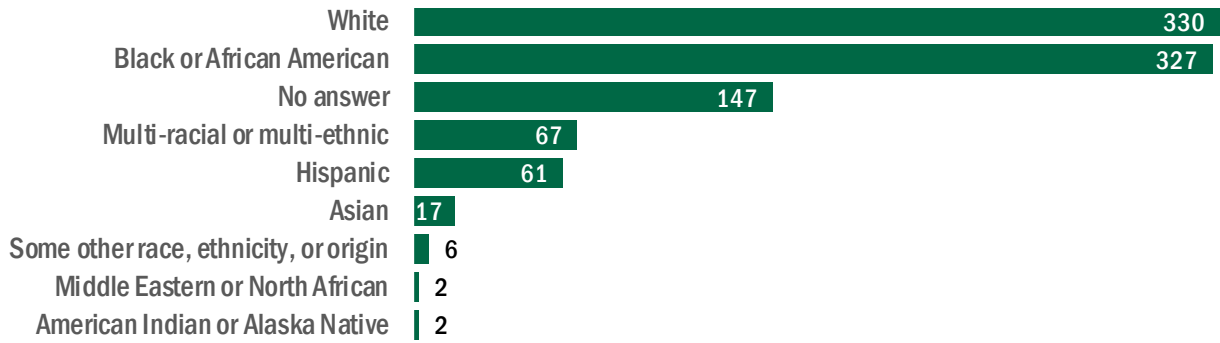
Parent/caregiver-reported campers' eligibility for free or reduced lunch at school.



Parent/caregiver-reported campers' genders.



Parent/caregiver-reported campers' race/ethnicity.



One-hundred and eighty-eight campers came from Boston Children’s Hospital, 121 from Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, and 86 from Yale-New Haven Hospital. The remaining campers came from other hospitals around the Northeast, some from the Midwest and some from abroad.



RESULTS

This evaluation examined three areas:

Overall Camper Outcomes

Independence

Program Fun

Data for this evaluation came from campers and their parents/caregivers.

Overall Camper Outcomes

Campers used a slider to select their response. The slider ranged from “Not at all” (0) to “The most possible” (100). Using a slider allows for more nuanced answers than those few typically provided in likert-type answers such as “strongly agree, agree, etc.” Below, the numbers refer to the number of campers who ranked each question as below 50, 50-79, or 80-100 on the scale of 0-100. Means and standard deviations for each question can be found in the appendix.

Camper Rating (0-100): <50 50-79 80-100
100 = “the most possible, 0 = “not at all”

I liked the counselors.



I enjoyed Camp.



I wanted to be at Camp.



I made new friends.



I was excited to be at Camp.



I liked the medical staff.



I felt like I belonged at Camp.



I was interested in the activities at Camp.

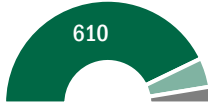


I want to help others.

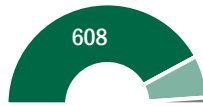


Camper Rating (0-100): <50 50-79 80-100
 100 = "the most possible, 0 = "not at all"

I was in a good mood during Camp.



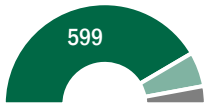
I was playful.



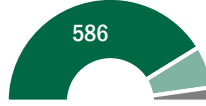
I was interested in new things at Camp.



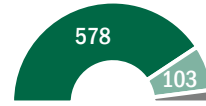
It was easy to focus on being at Camp.



I was interested in the people at Camp.



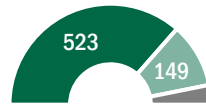
I paid attention at Camp.



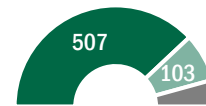
I appreciated nature.



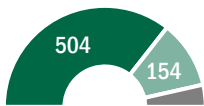
My teamwork skills increased.



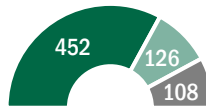
I was aware of challenges faced by others.



My confidence increased.



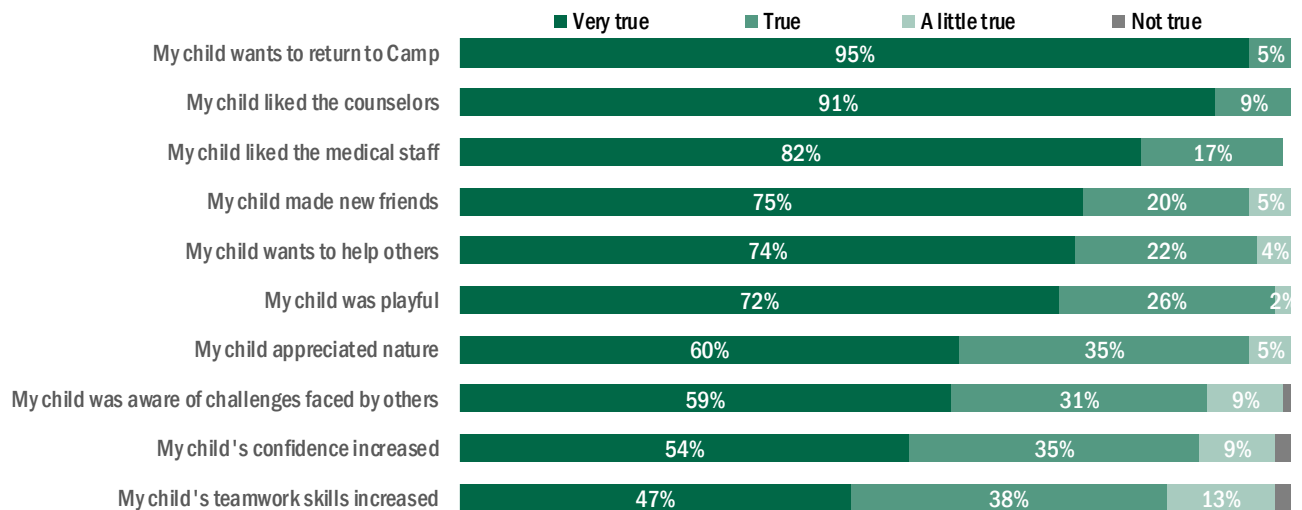
I am still thinking about something I learned at Camp.



NPS:
78

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) from campers was 78. The NPS is an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures the willingness of customers (in this case, campers) to recommend an organization's services to others. It is used as a proxy for gauging the customer's overall satisfaction with an organization's service and the customer's loyalty to the brand. For comparison, the average NPS for nonprofits in the last year according to SurveyMonkey was 52. "World class" is any score above 70.

Parents/Caregivers reported positive outcomes of their children's Camp experiences.



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

Parent/Caregiver quotes about other changes in their children:

44 responses were about their children's **positive Camp experiences**:

My son came home with a positive attitude, lots of spirit, feeling confident and good about himself, and recharged to meet life's challenges.

Their emotion, confidence and pure joy was palpable. It was wonderful to see her have an opportunity to shine in her own right and to be independent. The counselors fostered her independence, allowing her to choose different activities than her friends. They complimented her strength of character. My girl came home confident, independent and able to express her emotions on a new level. My son came home the happiest I've seen him, maybe ever. He felt appreciated by campers and the staff. Since being home, I see renewed confidence and joy. He's talked nonstop about following in the footsteps of some of the amazing counselors he met, both in terms of his camp and academic goals. His confidence has gotten a turbo injection. I truly feel Camp has given him a view at the potential life holds when you surround yourself with great people.

30 responses were about **confidence**:

Every year, and especially this year, she has grown in self-confidence and comfort with herself. She was able to join a large group of kids she didn't know the week after camp and walk into the room with confidence because she had just done that at THITWGC!

My child received great guidance with praise when doing the right thing. His confidence in making the right decisions, grows ever year he attends.

20 responses were about **independence**:

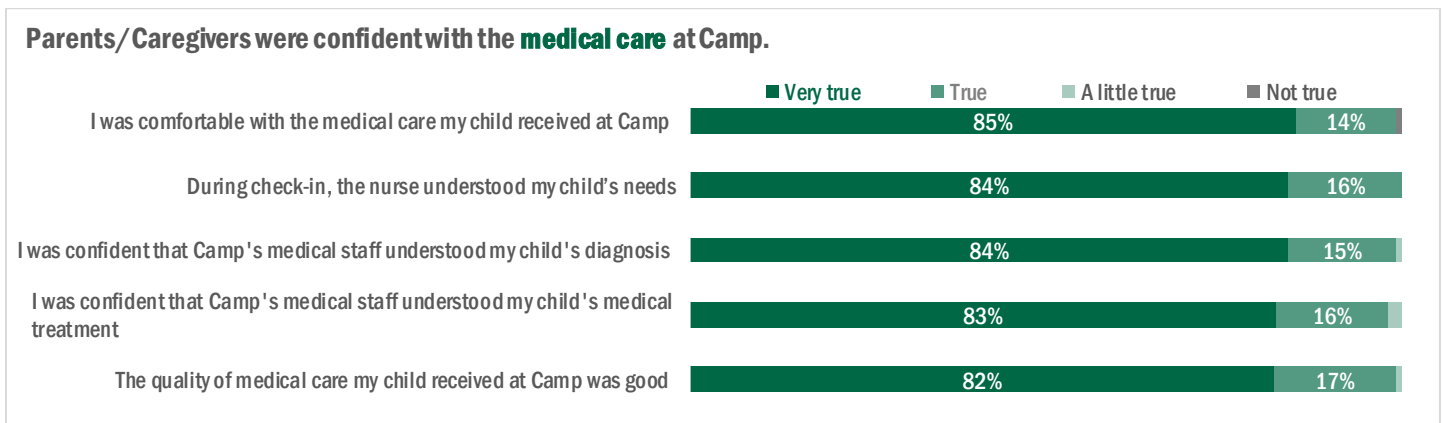
She loved every second of it and it did provide her with a level of independence that wasn't there prior to her going. She proved she could be away from home and from her family and succeed in so many ways that she wouldn't have known otherwise. She is improving her confidence each and every day and the environment she was in at camp and the friends and counselors she connected with helps with that so much!

He has matured and is excited to take on more responsibility at home, something he previously shied away from. He seems much more independent!

14 responses about making connections with others:

The experience at camp has always been positive for my son. Sometimes he would just need to be with others that would understand what he has gone through, and the things he questioned, and know he wasn't alone. The counselors have always shown him a positive way to deal and understand. They make all of us in my family feel comfortable and I never worried about my son for one second of time that he was there. He is grown now and is a better person for being allowed to be at this camp!

Our daughter has been in touch with her camp friends multiple times a day since returning. Texting is difficult for her so she uses face time and we hear laughter and joy in her voice as she animatedly converses with her latest group of friends. She is so happy to have contact with other people who understand when she isn't feeling as well as she would like and who don't question or push her to explain her pain. Knowing how important friendships and other relationships are in one's well-being, it is comforting for us to see her forge these important bonds.



Comments from parents/caregivers about Camp's medical care:

My son had his first week at camp with you last week. He cried when he left. He said the camp was amazing with his dairy intolerance - especially even making sure he had ice cream he could eat. He has been to other camps and said this was the best one hands down, best activities, staff and accommodations for his health needs. Since he is too sick to be in other summer camps- we feel so lucky he felt normal here! Hope to be back next year.

Thank you for allowing my daughter to participate. This was her second year and she had an amazing time! It is the only camp my daughter is able to attend alone and the only one we trust with her care and safety. Thank you for making this possible for children like my daughter!

Camp gave me the assurance that my child was safe and that their medical needs were a top priority.

Gives him confidence being away from home and having medical needs meet.

Her experiences with camp have made her consider becoming an APRN in the future. Whether or not she ultimately does so is years away, but it is her contact with the compassionate caregivers at camp that has made her think that a career path in nursing may be in her future. She has even gone so far as to research the kind of education needed, what the training involves, and what types of work she might be eligible for afterward! She came back with renewed enthusiasm for the medical staff and continues to voice her ideas about a career in nursing.

...

There were a few comments with suggestions to streamline the check-in process and several requests for more photos and communication with campers during the week.

Parents/Caregivers' Net Promoter Score: 96

Independence

Campers reported increased Independence.

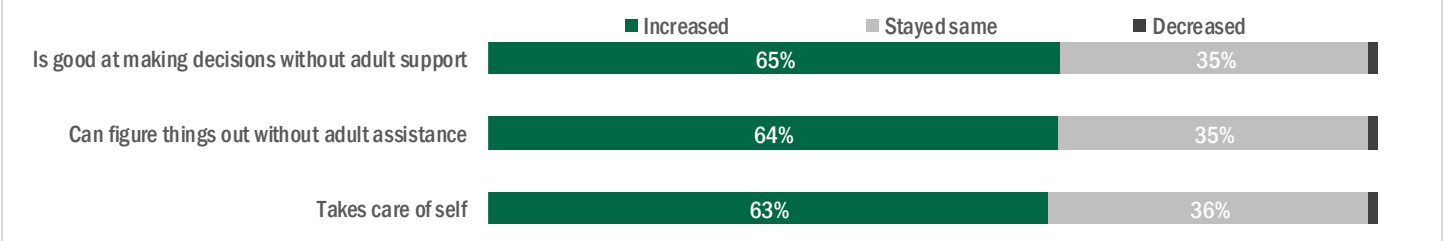


Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

Independence average: 2.7 (*SD*: .98) on a scale of -1: decreased, 0: did not increase or decrease, 1: increased a little, 2: increased some, and 3: increased a lot.

Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for this scale was .883, indicating good reliability in how campers answered these questions.

Parents/Caregivers reported their children increased their Independence.



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

Independence average: 2.3 (*SD*: 1.1) on a scale of -1: decreased, 0: did not increase or decrease, 1: increased a little, 2: increased some, and 3: increased a lot.

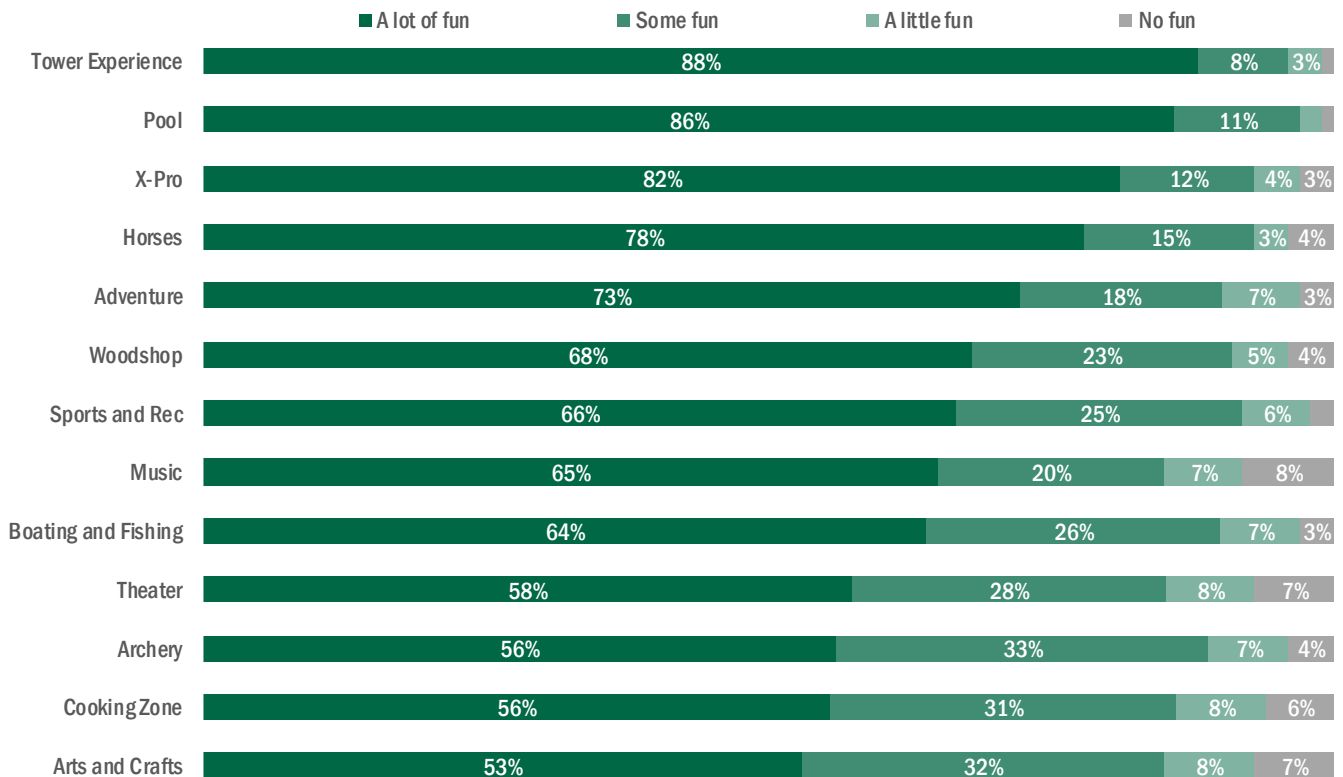
Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for this scale was .926, indicating excellent reliability in how parents/caregivers answered these questions.

How does Independence at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp compare to campers from a national sample of resident camps?

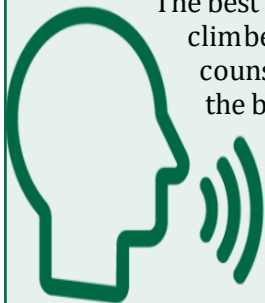
After adjusting the national average to reflect the scale used at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, we found that The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's campers' Independence ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .98$) was slightly higher than the national sample ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .98$), with a Cohen's d effect size of .33, meaning that the difference was of small magnitude.



**Campers had lots of fun during day programs.
Tower and Pool were favorites.**



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

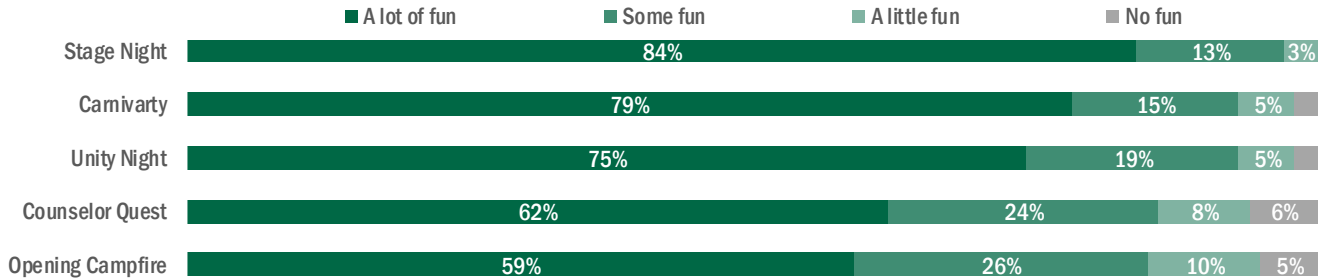


The best thing about camp was that I got to meet new people and that I tried all these new activities. I climbed the Tower which seemed scary at first but was fun when I got to the zip line. The counselors gave the campers tons of support when they were scared or needed something. In all, the best thing about camp is everything.

The best thing about camp was getting to know each other and try new things we never tried before also waking up early to have fun with our friends.

The best thing about camp is the fact that there always seems to be an activity planned out for you that ends up being a positive experience.

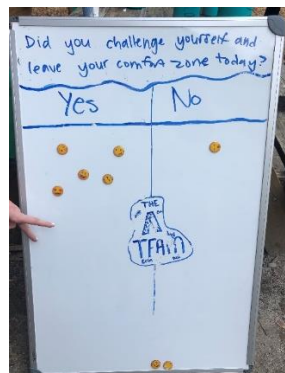
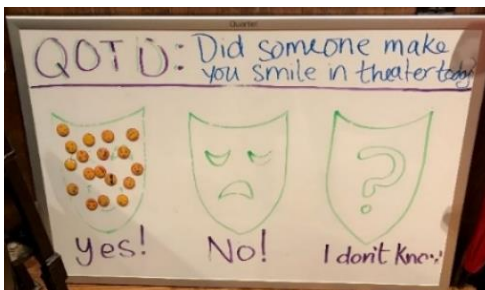
**Campers had lots of fun during evening programs.
Stage Night was a favorite.**



Percentages don't always add to 100% due to rounding error.

The overall average for Program Fun was 2.6 (*SD*:.38) on a scale of 0: no fun, 1: a little fun, 2: some fun, and 3: a lot of fun. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the "fun" scale was .888, indicating good reliability.

New this year at each program area was the reflection activity using "treasure boards." Program staff thought about the camper outcomes their activities would likely influence that day. At the end of each program, staff asked campers to place magnets to answer a question posed to the group. Dennis Rinaldi, Program Coordinator shared, "The treasure boards were a really fun way for me to connect with every program area on a daily basis to gauge different skills that campers were learning! The counselors were able to put their own twist on how they intentionally used the treasure boards as an additional de-briefing device. For example, the horse barn would complete the treasure boards on the ride back from the barn to downtown. The counselors really enjoyed visually seeing how much the kids enjoyed their program area or learned a new skill."



Did AGE make a difference to camper outcomes?

Yes. Younger campers (7-11) reported slightly more fun ($m = 2.6$, $SD = .36$) than older campers ($m = 2.5$, $SD = .39$). ($p < .001$, $d = .26$). This finding is similar to findings from previous summers.

Did it matter to camper outcomes if campers reported more fun?

Yes, as it has in previous summers.

The more fun campers had, the more Engagement they reported ($R^2 = .26$, $p < .001$).

The more fun campers had, the more increases in Independence they reported ($R^2 = .07$, $p < .001$).

The more fun campers had, the more positive outcomes they reported ($R^2 = .29$, $p < .001$).

The relationship between fun and Engagement and positive outcomes was somewhat strong, indicating that camp staff should do all they can to maximize fun in program areas because if campers have more fun, they have better outcomes. Fun seems to make a small difference to campers' independence but the influence seems slight and no recommendations are warranted.

Did SESSION make a difference to camper outcomes?

The only difference between sessions when it came to the overall camper outcomes was between session 6 ($m = 88.3$, $SD = 12.79$) and session 8 ($m = 93.09$, $SD = 7.6$) ($p = .036$, $d = .46$). Session 6 is a session for children with sickle cell disease and session 8 is a session for sibling. These two sessions were not statistically significantly different from the other sessions. Camp staff should examine what might be different between sessions 6 and 8 regarding programming, staff or volunteer training, or other operational aspects that could influence these results.

Did UNIT make a difference to camper outcomes?


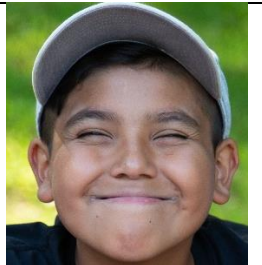

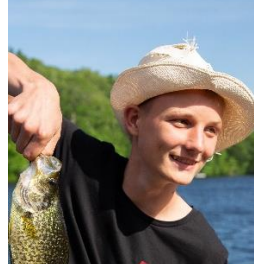

There was a small difference in outcomes scores between two units. The Red unit ($m = 89.5$, $SD = 11.81$) was slightly lower than the Purple unit ($m = 92.49$, $SD = 9.2$) for overall camper outcomes ($p = .032$, $d = .28$). These two units were not statistically significantly different from the other sessions. Camp staff should examine what might go on in cabin leadership that could account for differences in campers' reports of their engagement.

What did campers like best about Camp?

Campers shared their favorite moments, which are organized according to size, with the most frequently mentioned being the largest. Words were included if 20 or more campers reported them.

Activities Woodshop
 Counselors Boating&Fishing Tower
Friends
 Everything
 Horses Pool

Selected camper responses to the question “What did you like best about Camp?”

	<p>The best thing about camp for is that I felt no shame in being myself and everyone can express themselves freely without feeling judged.</p>	<p>Camp was the best because I got to make friends and eat s’mores.</p>	<p>The best thing about camp is the energy and the positive vibes that are in the air throughout the week.</p>	
<p>The best thing about camp was the friends I made and the amount of joy the camp had to offer.</p>	<p>Making new friends and actually feeling like I belong somewhere. Plus my counselors were awesome so thanks for dealing with me and my mood swings and you guys made this place EXTRA SPECIAL.</p>	<p>I think the best thing about camp is how that no matter who you are or what you are here because you are accepted. The counselors and campers alike treated me with kindness.</p>	<p>How you can feel like you belong and there are other people who can relate to you. I also like how you can be yourself. It also made me be more outgoing.</p>	<p>Going to all the activities, and making amazing new friends, and feeling like you belong here.</p>
<p>Being able to make new friends from all around the country! It’s an awesome experience getting to be at camp for a entire week. The counselors and medical staff are so caring and supportive. The program staff are awesome too because they make programs the most fun it can be.</p>	<p>Making new friends and hanging with them because at the end of the week they are like family to you.</p>		<p>You get to be you, make new life friends, and try new things.</p>	<p>What I love most about camp is that you don't have to worry about everything else in your life and can just have fun.</p>
<p>Being at a camp where everybody is the same but different at the same time.</p>	<p>Everything but in my opinion it's the amount of fun you have that really hits you and how much fun you have on the journey.</p>	<p>I liked the fact that we were able to talk about problems that we felt we had to hide and everyone is so trustworthy.</p>	<p>The best thing about camp are all of the other campers, because they support one another and inspire each other campers to do their best.</p>	<p>Being with people who accepted me for me and understood what I was going through and how I felt this week.</p>
	<p>The environment and the attitude and the camp provides an overall safe environment.</p>	<p>The best thing about camp is the vibes that people give off. The good vibes and fun really kept me going and made me happy all the time.</p>	<p>Meeting people who have experienced things similar to what I have.</p>	

The Counselors, Med staff and other kids have become a form of family to my child. When leaving I saw phone numbers exchanged and tears flowing from both children and counselors. True love and admiration was displayed everywhere.

My child was happy to be in an environment where people understood her condition and limitations, where she could just have fun.

She tried new things and made friends and had inside jokes with them and was so full of light and life! What a gift!

Listening to her talk about the counselors, other campers, the amazing activities, and knowing that she could spend a week just being a kid and not feeling different than everyone else is completely amazing. My favorite moment of pick-up was when we got in the golf cart with a counselor who had the same leg brace and same forearm crutches as our daughter. Her eyes lit up. Seeing that gave her some extra confidence and motivation. It was really cool to see.

I could write pages about how much our daughter loved camp and how much she gained from the week spent with you all. You are all truly incredible, in a million ways. The care, love, silliness, compassion, confidence and support you gave to our daughter that showed through SO much even though she was only with you for a week, is something we could never say thank you enough for. She will continue to grow from everything she learned with you and everyone she met had such an impact and we can give her the world but could never give her this experience if it wasn't for you all. She's been through situations since her diagnosis that no kid should have to but all of that seemed to have slipped her memory when she was at camp and she felt like everyone else and that all of you 'got it' and wasn't the 'girl who had cancer'. That on top of everything else means so much. The week at camp was truly a gift that she will cherish forever and we as parents will cherish for you all granting her this opportunity. Perfect memories and she can't wait to go back!

Thank for this experience! She struggles with her illness and makes every effort to hide it. She had a week to simply be a kid and not worry about hiding.



The Bottom Line



The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp provides children with strong opportunities for friendships and interest in exploration. While children and youth at other camps might also experience these positive outcomes, the context of living with serious illnesses elevates these outcomes for our campers. Parents and caregivers agreed and commented positively on the medical care their children received at Camp. Overall, campers reported having fun at Camp, indicating that fun and positive outcomes can occur together.

After seven summers of examining campers' fun reports of day and evening programs, it has become clear that:

1. Pool, Tower and Stage Night are always reported by campers as the most fun activities.
2. Arts & Crafts and Opening Campfire are always the least fun activities.
3. The amount of fun predicts other outcomes. More fun = better outcomes.
4. "Friends" is always campers' top favorite moment or thing they like best about Camp.
5. More information is needed about what makes each program area more or less fun. The addition of the "treasure boards" this year to focus on specific camper outcomes possibly helped increase campers' overall "fun" from 2.4 in 2018 to 2.6 in 2019.



Camper recommendations seem to shift each year. While most campers would change nothing or would make Camp longer, trends emerge in specific cabins, such as wanting less rest time, younger campers wanting to do what the older campers do, and complaints about the beds in the cabins. Further, Camp should examine the qualities of Arts & Crafts and Opening Campfire to determine how to make them more fun.



Although slight, some differences in camper outcomes emerged between Sessions 6 and 8 and between the Red and Purple units. Providing a consistent camp experience across sessions and units should be a goal to work toward for summer staff and volunteers.



Parents/caregivers aligned with campers in their perceptions that Camp offers strong opportunities for campers to experience positive outcomes such as friendships and independence.



Certainly, some limitations exist for this evaluation. First, campers reported about themselves, which can sometimes be unreliable and inaccurate. Second, because campers did the surveys at the end of their Camp sessions, they might have been experiencing an elation that inflated their answers. Third, parents/caregivers might have inflated their answers because they wanted to believe that their investment of time and effort to get their children to Camp was worthwhile.

The positive direction of camper outcomes is clear. The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp makes a difference to campers.

APPENDIX

Camper Scale Performance and Items

Scale	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Positive Outcomes* (range: 0-100) M = 91.03; SD = 10.11 $\alpha = .891$ Inter-item range .110 to .731 rFun = .54 (p<.001)	At Camp this week, I liked the counselors.†	94.34	13.34
	At Camp this week, I liked the medical staff. †	93.35	14.40
	At Camp this week, my confidence increased.	85.61	19.91
	At Camp this week, I made new friends. †	93.56	13.65
	At Camp this week, my teamwork skills increased.	86.46	18.90
	At Camp this week, I was playful. †	91.91	14.17
	At Camp this week, I was aware of challenges faced by others.	85.44	19.96
	At Camp this week, I appreciated nature.	87.38	20.39
	I want to help others.	92.12	15.55
	I wanted to be at Camp this week. †	95.33	13.85
	It was easy for me to focus on being at Camp this week. †	90.52	17.53
	I was interested in the activities at Camp this week. †	93.09	13.50
	I felt like I belonged at Camp this week. †	93.44	14.96
	I enjoyed Camp this week. †	96.17	11.19
	I was excited to be at Camp this week. †	95.53	12.08
	Independence (range: 1-5) M = 3.71; SD = .98 $\alpha = .883$ Inter-item range .40 to .82 rFun = .27 (p<.001)	I was interested in new things at Camp this week. †	91.95
I had fun at Camp this week. †		96.59	11.49
I paid attention at Camp this week. †		89.75	16.39
I am still thinking about something I learned at Camp this week. †		83.40	24.51
I was in a good mood during Camp this week. †		91.30	17.44
Fun (range: 0-3) M = 2.56; SD = .38		18 day and evening programs (e.g., Pool, Horses, Arts & Crafts, Carnivarty).	

* Some of the camper outcome items measured “Engagement” which is an indicator of program quality. Research shows that engagement is required for other positive outcomes to occur in youth programs. Some of us wonder “how much” Camp is needed to make a difference? Well, the research isn’t very clear about the “dose” of camp or other youth programs that is needed to result in better youth outcomes. What research does show is that it is less about the *amount* of a program and more about the *quality* of engagement that makes a difference to youth outcomes. The 2019 program evaluation measured engagement as consisting of enjoyment, focus, interest and a sense of belonging. Analyses of the engagement data are ongoing, but the basic results for ALL camper outcomes are shared in this report under “Positive Outcomes.” Other items reflect short-term outcomes from the theory of change of the summer program.

† Indicates items in the Engagement scale.

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Recommended citation:
The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. (2019). Summer camp outcomes report. Ashford, CT: Author