

# THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM 2015 CAMPER OUTCOMES REPORT



a seriousfun camp

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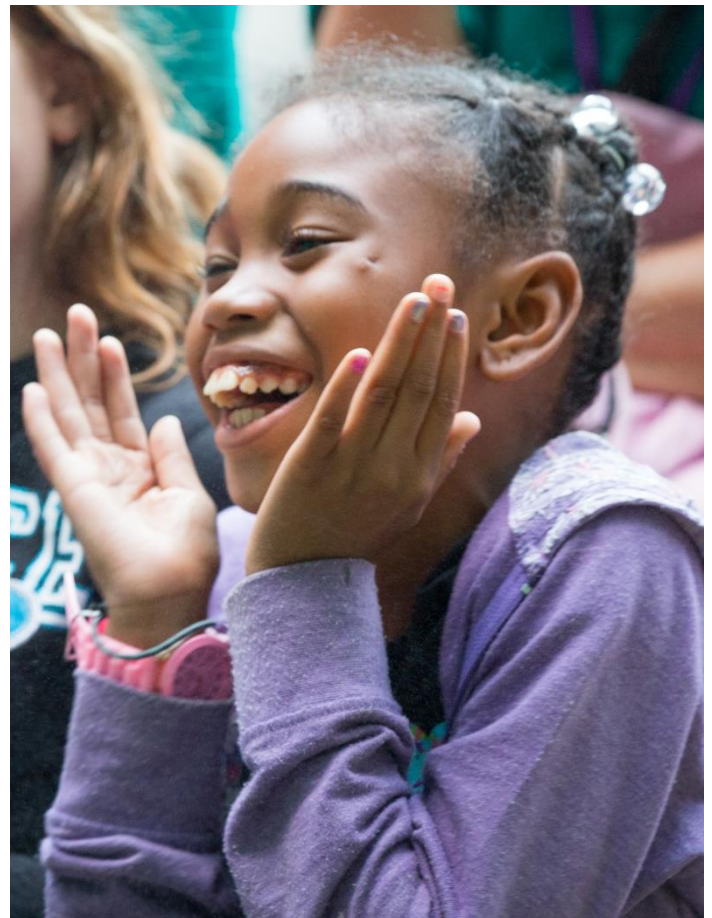
## BACKGROUND

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, the Camp seeks to provide these experiences to children coping with cancer, blood disorders, hemophilia, sickle cell, metabolic disease and other rare and serious diseases, as well as their healthy siblings.

In the strategic plan of 2013, the Board of Directors set a goal that from 2013 through 2017 we would develop a greater understanding of the impact of Camp programs in terms of camper and parent satisfaction as well as programmatic outcomes. Research and evaluation efforts aim to find out more about the “different kind of healing” that can occur in the Camp experience.

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 of the summer camp program in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This report reflects the 2015 evaluation, and there are comparisons to previous years’ results as well.

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

This summer, we continued evaluating Camp's four core values, focusing on two of them: safety and camaraderie, which we also evaluated in 2013. Last summer, we explored the other two values: possibility and appreciation, and we will revisit those in 2016. Another outcome explored in both 2014 and 2015 was "friendship skills," and we explored "program fun" in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

**Safety** is described by THITWGC: "The care of children with serious illnesses is both a serious responsibility and a serious privilege. Physical and emotional safety is paramount in all we do." Safety is important to consider because campers living with serious illness deserve a safe space to be a kid and play, while being unobtrusively medically supported.

**Camaraderie** is described by THITWGC: "We create a community that fosters friendship, inclusivity, a little bit of mischief and a whole lot of laughter." Camaraderie is important because youth living with serious illnesses often have difficulty connecting with others due to hospitalizations and fear. Camp offers a safe place for building relationships and having fun together.

**Friendship skills** is defined as "making friends and maintaining relationships." Friendship skills are important to youth with serious illness because they typically lack many opportunities to develop these skills due to hospitalizations, bullying and delays in meeting developmental milestones.

**Program fun** is defined as the amount of fun in day and evening programs. Many other words could be used to describe feelings about programs, but in our experience, when asked what kids like about an activity, they typically reply "It's fun!" Fun is important to youth with serious illness because typically, campers live lives characterized by fear, uncertainty, pain and isolation. To combat these negative experiences, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp aims to provide youth with programs that are fun and medically-supported.

The purpose of the evaluation was to understand the outcomes of "safety," "camaraderie," "friendship skills" and "program fun" from the perspectives of campers and parents/caregivers. The evaluation questions were:

1. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *safety*? (pp. 5-6)
2. To what extent did participants agree with statements about experiencing *camaraderie*? (p. 7)
3. Did participants report any changes in *friendship skills*? (pp. 8-9)
4. Did campers' parents report changes in their children's outcomes?
5. How much *fun* were the program activities? (p. 10)
6. Did age, session, unit, cabin or mode of transportation to camp predict the above outcomes? (pp. 11-12)
7. Were there any differences in outcomes this year compared to other years? (pp. 13-15)
8. How did parents/caregivers describe Camp? (p. 16)
9. What were campers' favorite moments at Camp? (p. 16-17)
10. What recommendations did campers make for summer camp? (p. 17)

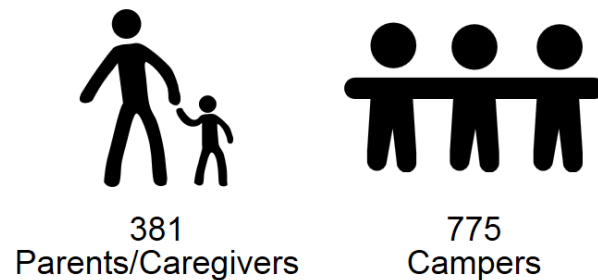
Discussion and recommendations can be found on page 18, and detailed statistical analyses are found in the Appendix on pages 19-21.

This evaluation covers the 8 one-week sessions 2-9. In 2015, session 1 was an extended family weekend.

## Methods

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.

All participants completed safety, camaraderie and program fun questions. Participants aged 10 and older also completed the 14-item friendship skills scale (American Camp Association Camp Youth Outcomes Battery, 2011). Parents/caregivers and volunteers also completed surveys after each session. Parents/caregivers answered one question each about their perceived changes in their children's safety and camaraderie, and answered four questions about their children's friendship skills. Both campers and parents/caregivers answered open-ended questions about their experiences.



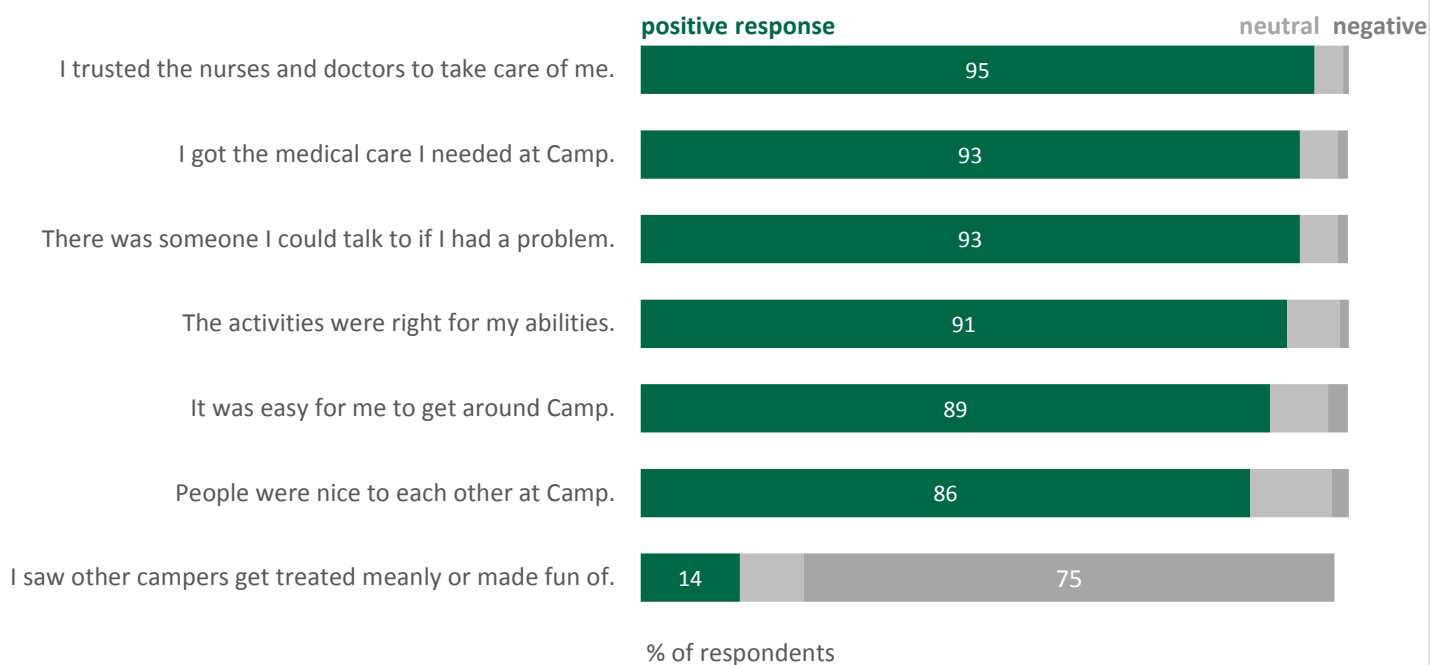
*Special thanks to **Brandy D'Amboise-Blish** (Research and Evaluation Intern) and **Ashley Boyd** (Newman's Own Fellow) for their incredible help with data collection and analysis for this evaluation.*



## RESULTS

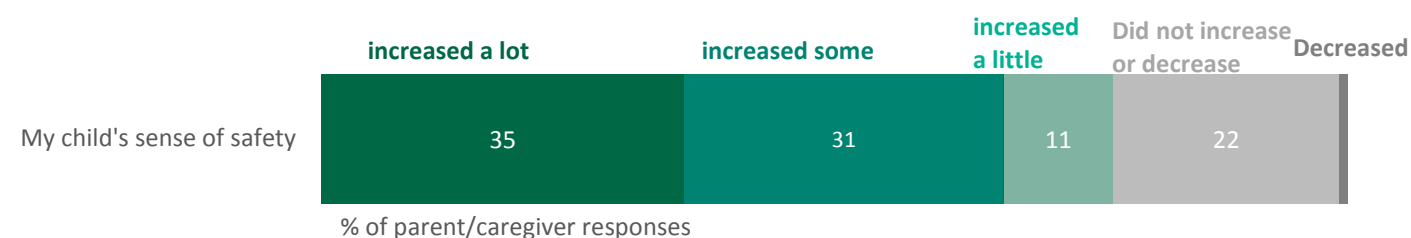
Campers felt medically, physically, and emotionally **SAFE** at Camp.

Note that the last question is intentionally reverse-worded.

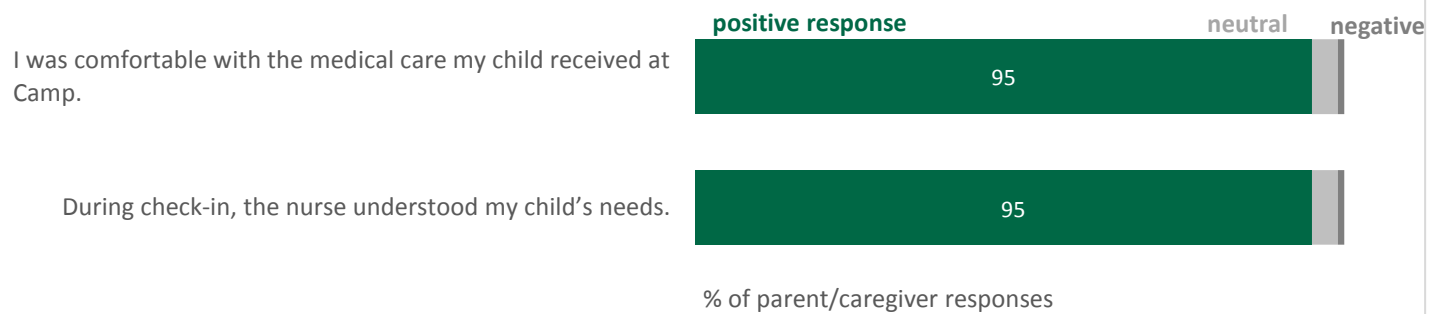


Safety average: 4.54 (*SD*: .45) out of 5, with 5 meaning “strongly agree.”

77% of parents/caregivers reported their child's sense of **safety** increased.



Parent/caregiver perceptions of **medical care** were very high.



Selected parent/caregiver comments about safety:

My son has had a history of being bullied in school, sports and in the neighborhood. This camp experience was an amazing experience for him. He was happy the whole time. He felt welcome by his peers for the first time. He talks about the "no put down rule" all the time.

My child had an exceptional camp experience this past summer. She was made to feel very safe and was able to really connect with other campers. Great experience and THANK YOU!

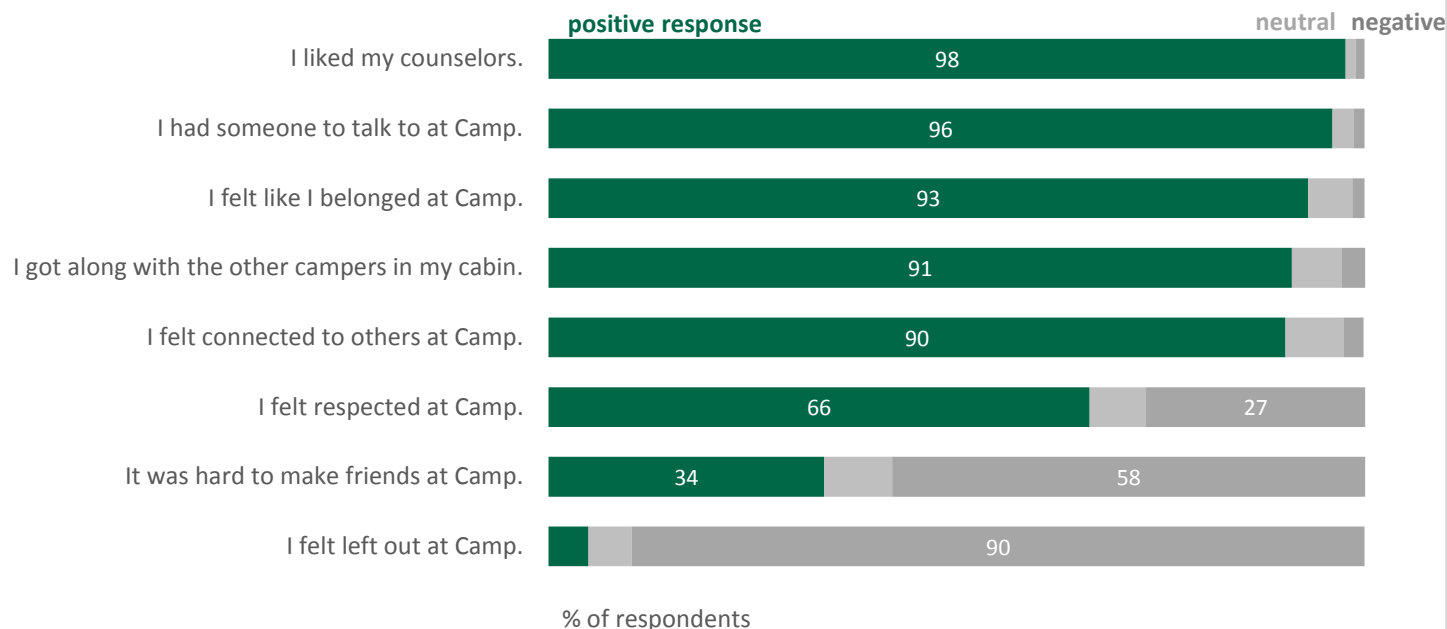
I think THITWGC is the place where my daughter feels the safest to be who she really is: kind and caring. Sometimes it is more difficult for her to find her 'tribe' in other teenage settings; but at Camp she is engulfed by like-minded souls--from campers to counselors and chefs--and it would be impossible not to feel the safety, love and respect!

He always feels safe at Camp. That is his space where he feels most comfortable. He has learned to be part of a group of friends and learn the importance of teamwork and other friend's special needs.



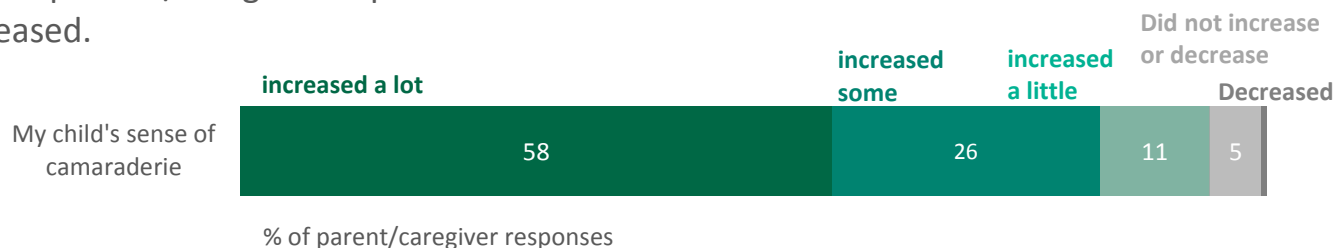
## Campers felt **CAMARADERIE** at Camp.

Note that the last 2 questions are intentionally negatively-worded.



Camaraderie average: 4.37 (SD: .57) out of 5, with 5 meaning “strongly agree.”

## 95% of parents/caregivers reported their child's sense of **camaraderie** increased.



### Selected parent/caregiver quotes about camaraderie:

Our son is shy and guarded while at school, but seems to feel safe and supported enough at Camp to come out of his protective shell, make friends, and experience true happiness. We CELEBRATE this camaraderie!!

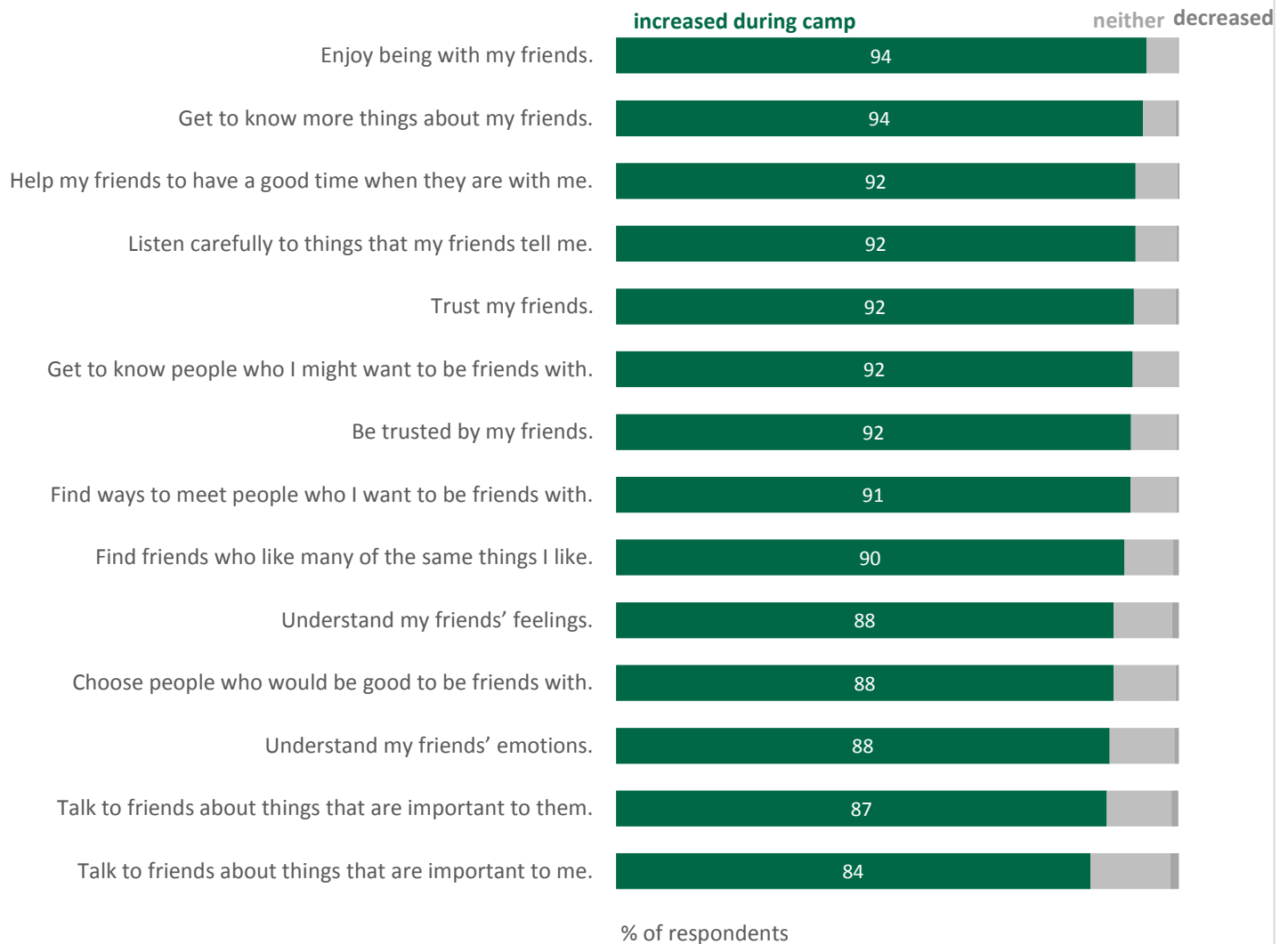
He also loved having the chance to meet other boys with the same medical condition he has. I actually heard him say to one of the boys on the first day "I never met somebody like me."

These children form such amazing bonds and find such a sense of belonging that doesn't seep into the world outside of camp.

She loved the camaraderie and talked more than once about how everyone was accepted as they are and included. I think that was the best part for her and helped tremendously to boost her self esteem.

## Friendship skills increased significantly during Camp in all areas.

Top responses involved strengthening ties with existing friends.

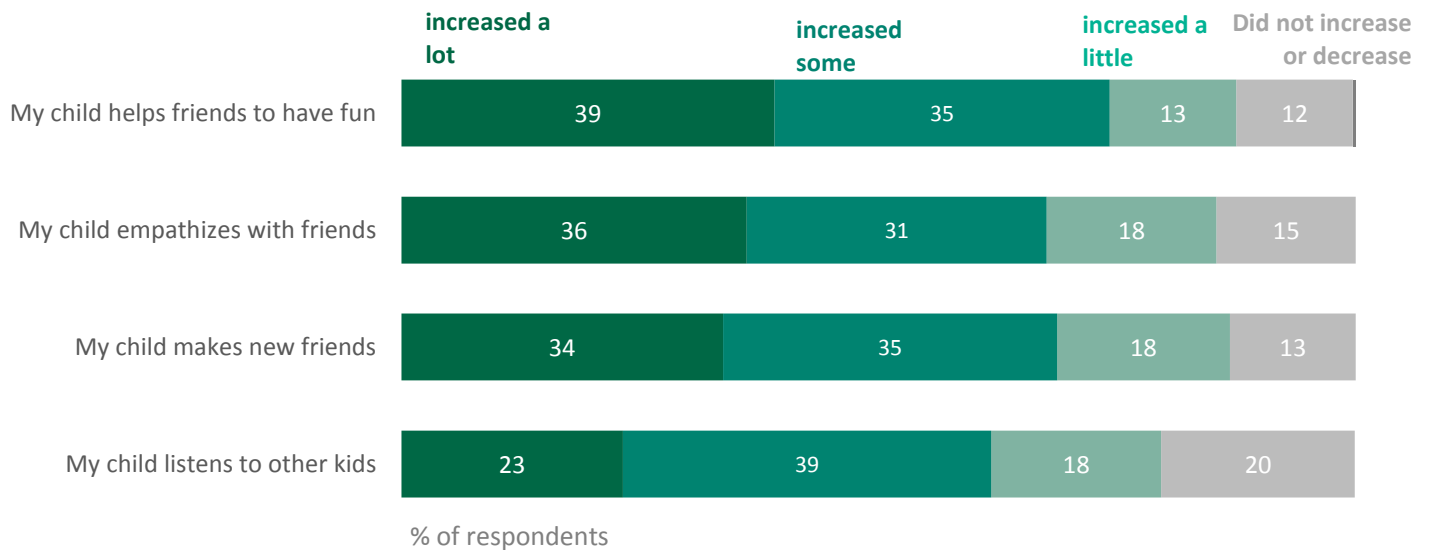


Friendship skills average: 2.22 (*SD*: .8) on a scale of -1: decreased, 0: did not increase or decrease, 1: increased a little, 2: increased some, and 3: increased a lot.





Over 80% of parents/caregivers reported their child's **friendship skills** increased.



#### Parent/Caregiver quotes about friendships:

When he talks about the friends he made at camp, he doesn't talk about how they've been sick, and we think it is a huge relief for him to get to spend a week knowing that others aren't defining him by his illness. We think it really has helped him develop camaraderie and good friendships.

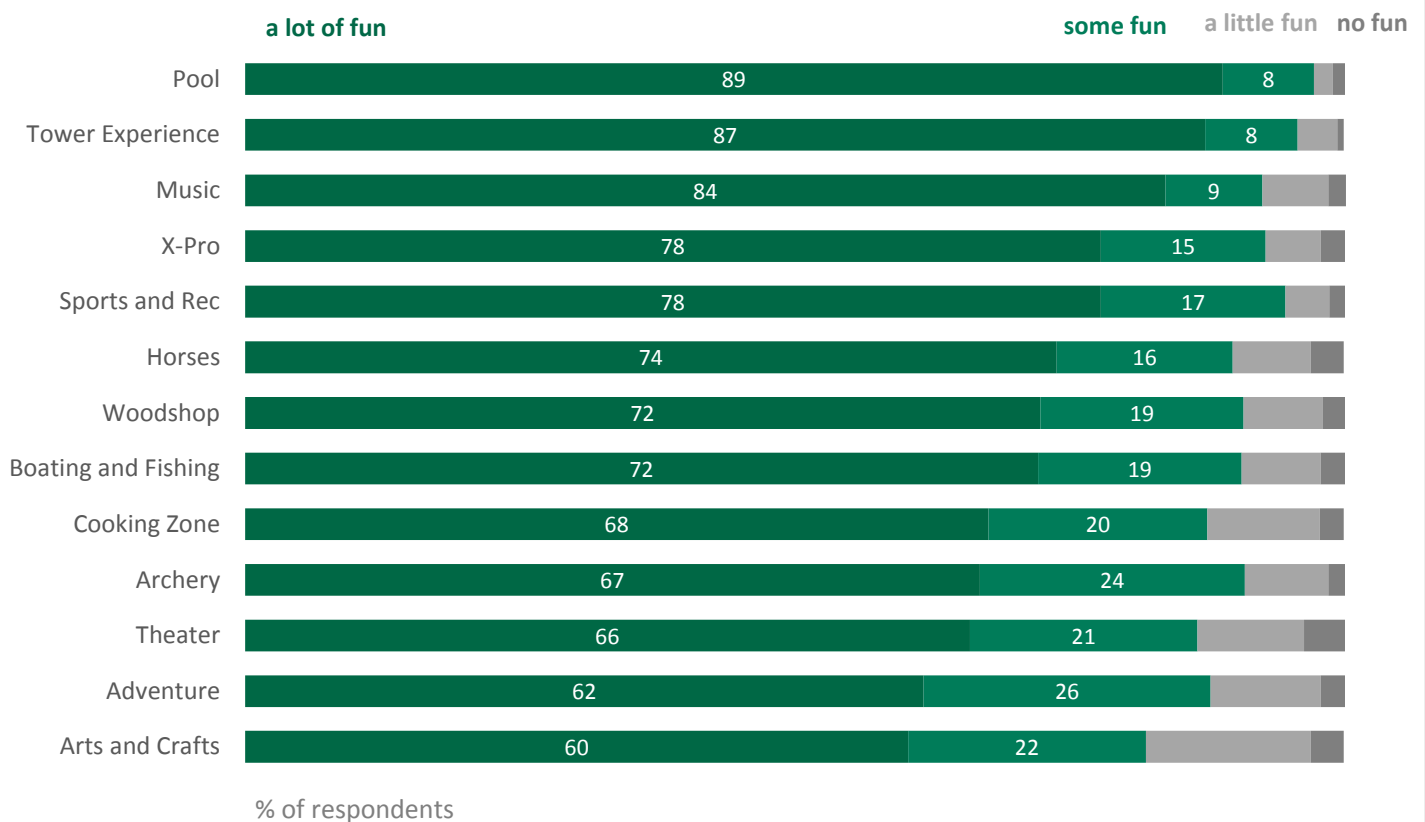
The camp helped her feel like she was home with tons of friends. She felt happy, free & needed. She learned a lot about different people & helped her to learn about herself.

This is the 3rd year our child attended the camp - in previous years, our child did not remember any of the names of fellow campers or bunkers. This year saw a change toward the positive - our child remembered the names of several campers and bunkers, provided the names of several new friends, and even obtained the phone number of a camper that lives nearby with hopes/plans for the two to get together in the fall. We are overjoyed at the improvement in our child's friendship skills!! Thank you Hole in the Wall!!!!

My daughter met a new friend at camp that will be having a bone marrow transplant soon. She wants to support this friend every step of the way. Thanks to camp for bringing these girls together. She is learning real life skills and having fun at the same time.

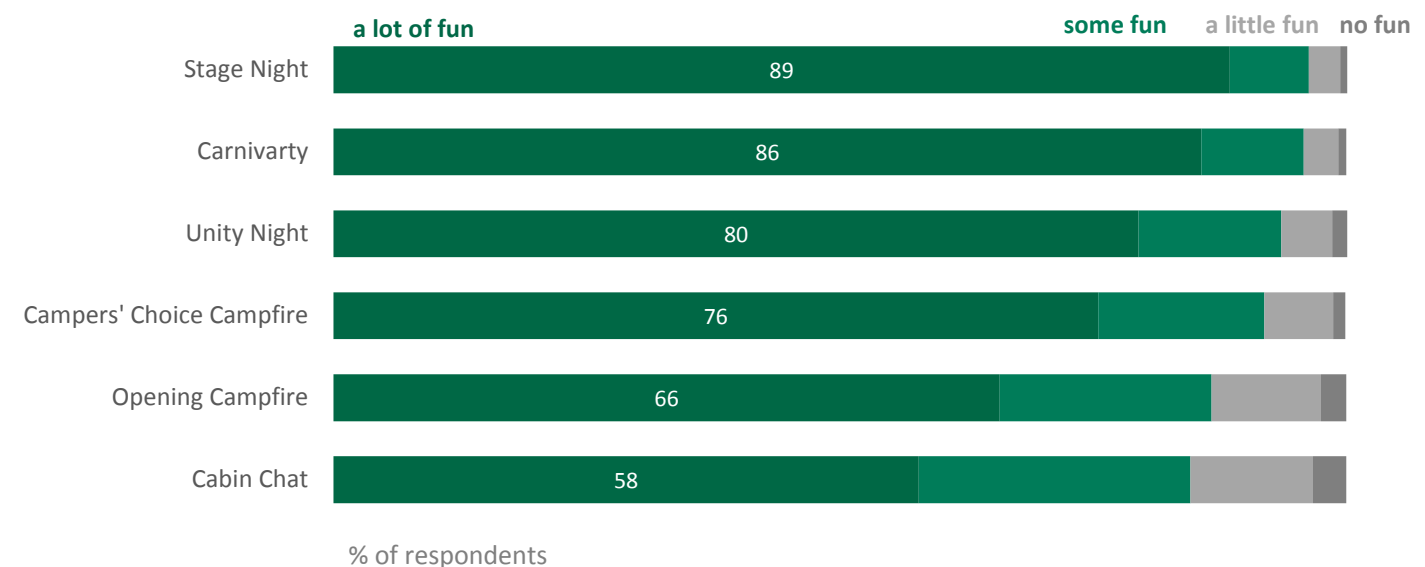
## Campers had lots of fun during **Day Programs**.

Favorites were Pool and Tower.



## Campers had lots of fun in **Evening Programs**.

Favorites were Stage Night and Carnivarty.

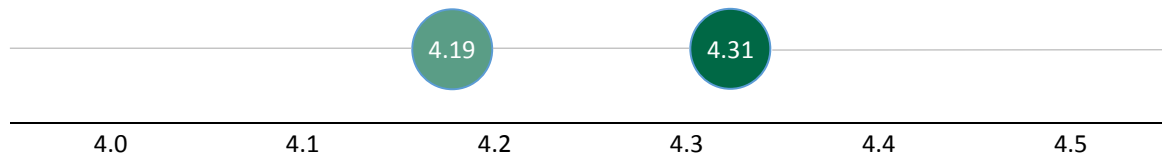


The overall average for Program Fun was 2.62 (*SD*: .38) on a scale of 0: no fun, 1: a little fun, 2: some fun, and 3: a lot of fun.

## DIGGING DEEPER

### Did arriving by CAR or BUS make a difference to camper outcomes?

Compared to campers who came by **car**, campers who arrived by **bus** experienced slightly more **camaraderie**.



Camaraderie: Car ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD: .55$ ), Bus ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD: .55$ ) ( $p = .01$ ,  $d = .22$ )

Parents/caregivers agreed: arriving by car or bus made a difference to their reports of their campers' camaraderie, but not their campers' feelings of safety and friendship skills. Parents/caregivers of campers who arrived by bus reported slightly more camaraderie than parents/caregivers of campers who arrived by car. Car ( $M = 1.78$ ,  $SD: .9$ ), Bus ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD: .86$ ) ( $p = .03$ ,  $d = .23$ ).

### Did AGE make a difference to camper outcomes?

Compared to **older campers**, **younger campers** experienced less safety and camaraderie, but more fun.



Safety: Young ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD: .47$ ), Older ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD: .41$ ) ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = .29$ )

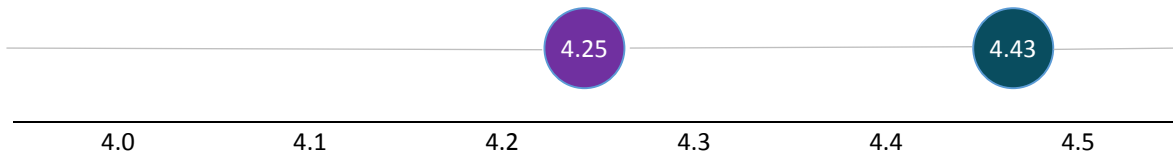
Camaraderie: Young ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD: .53$ ), Older ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD: .5$ ) ( $p < .001$ ,  $d = .95$ )

Fun: Young ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD: .36$ ), Older ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD: .39$ ) ( $p = .001$ ,  $d = .24$ )

There were some statistically significant and meaningful age-related differences in responses to questions in this set. First, older campers (aged 12-16) reported that it was harder to make friends (average: 2.37) than younger campers (aged 7-11, average: 4.44). Second, younger campers reported that they felt less respected at Camp (average: 2.79) than did older campers (average: 4.48). These differences were statistically significant and the magnitude of the differences was very large (1.42, and 1.24 respectively).

### Did UNIT make a difference to camper outcomes?

Compared to campers in the Blue and Green units, Purple unit campers experienced slightly less camaraderie.



Camaraderie: Purple ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD: .57$ ) was slightly lower than Blue ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD: .58$ ) ( $p < .05$ ,  $d = .31$ ) and Green ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD: .51$ ) ( $p < .05$ ,  $d = .33$ ). There were no differences between the other units.

### Did SESSION make a difference to camper outcomes?

Nope! Outcomes were consistent across all 8 sessions for both campers and parents/caregivers.

So, feelings of camaraderie seemed to be lower for campers who came by **car**, were **younger**, and were in the **Purple** unit. Of these 3 areas, only **age** seemed to show a strong influence on feelings of camaraderie while the other 2 seemed to have a slight influence. It's important to keep in mind that ALL scores were quite high, indicating positive experiences for nearly all campers. While these differences were *statistically* significant, they are not necessarily *practically* significant. Digging deeper into some of the results allows us to make small tweaks to staff training and programming for future summers.



Please see the Appendix for more detailed information about differences in responses to questions among units, sessions, ages, and mode of transportation.



## Outcome Comparisons

Safety	2013
	4.49
	<b>2015</b>
	4.37

Camaraderie	2013
	4.58
	<b>2015</b>
	4.54

There was a small statistical difference in Safety between 2013 and 2015, but the difference was small and not very meaningful ( $p < .001$ ,  $t = 3.45$ ,  $df = 1162$ , Cohen's  $d = .22$ ).

There was no statistical difference in Camaraderie between 2013 and 2015, so the slight variation is due to chance.

Additional questions were added for each of these outcomes in 2015, so caution should be used when interpreting these results because the question sets were different in each year. Additionally, the set of questions for both outcomes was only moderately reliable, meaning that campers' answers did not always relate to each other.

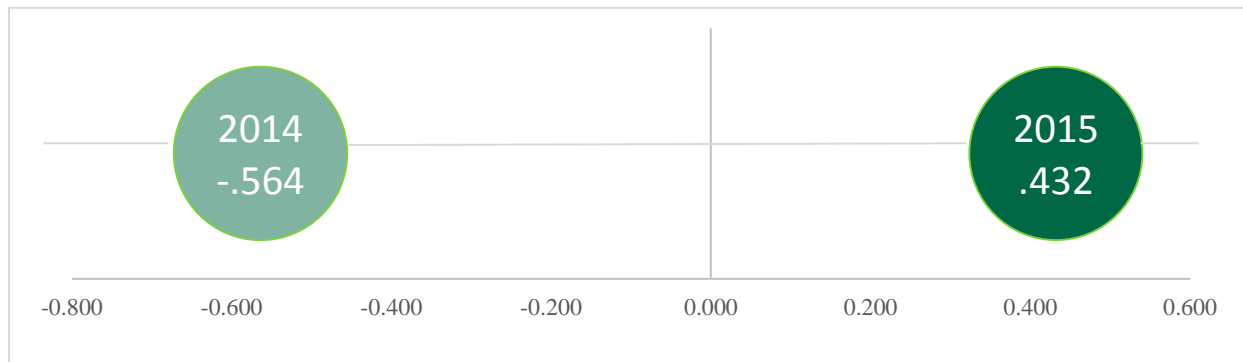


## What about Friendship Skills?

In 2015, we added a short training in staff orientation about how to cultivate friendship skills in campers. We compared campers' friendship skills scores to 2014 when we did not have a training.

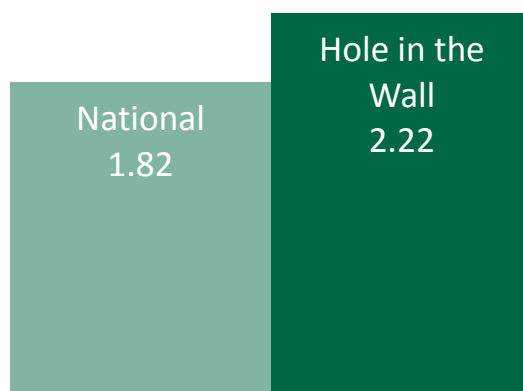
Did the training make a difference? YES!

After standardizing the campers' scores to account for slight changes in response options each year, we found that after combining both 2014 and 2015 scores and finding out the average (0.000 in the graph below), in 2015, camper friendship skills statistically and meaningfully increased. The training accounted for about 25% of the difference in scores between years ( $R^2 = .246$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = .245$ ).



## How do Friendship Skills 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' Friendship Skills ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = .8$ ) were statistically significantly and moderately more than the national sample ( $M = 1.82$ ,  $SD = .9$ ), with a Cohen's  $d$  effect size of .47, meaning that the difference was of medium magnitude.



Program Fun	2013 2.54
	2014 2.49
	<b>2015</b> 2.62

There was a small statistical increase of 5.2% in Fun between 2014 and 2015, but the difference was small and not very meaningful ( $p < .001$ ,  $t = 5.01$ ,  $df = 1415$ , Cohen's  $d = .26$ ).

The questions asked about fun in both years were the same, and the set of questions was statistically reliable.

Similar to past years, the amount of fun a camper had moderately predicted their feelings of safety, camaraderie, and friendship skills. See the Appendix for more information.



### What were the top 100 words parents/caregivers use to describe Camp?



### *What were campers' favorite moments?*

Campers shared their favorite moments, which are organized below according to size, with the most frequently mentioned being the largest.





## Selected camper responses to the question “What was your favorite moment at Camp?”

There are so many jokes and I felt accepted and loved by the counselors and cabin mates.

Getting to know everyone and truly come together as a unit. It was as if I made a new family during this past week. The counselors were like my moms and it was such a great week.

Making new friends that I could connect with and that are struggling with the same things as me.

I think everything because my friends and counsellors are so awesome fun to hang out with. Also inside the dining hall, we sing and dance after we eat. It really makes me feel much better inside and if I could choose if home or camp was better, I would choose camp. I really think that the HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP is my family. I really hope you get this message because I think that it means something to me 😊😐🙌❤️

## *What would campers change about Camp?*

# NOTHING (386)

Technology  
Cabins  
Longer  
Food  
Rules  
Less  
Supervision  
Age  
Getting Around  
Rest

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp operates a strong summer camp program for campers that supports the positive outcomes of safety, camaraderie and friendship skills. These outcomes come along with high levels of fun, meaning that the more fun kids have, the higher their outcomes. Parents/caregivers aligned with campers in their perceptions that Camp offers strong opportunities for campers to experience safety, camaraderie, friendship skills and program fun. Compared to the national average, campers' friendship skills increased more during their camp sessions, and the addition of a short staff training made a positive difference to campers' friendship skills. Campers experienced safety and camaraderie at Camp, although younger campers experienced less camaraderie than older campers.

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.

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

### Areas for further consideration

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp should continue to offer opportunities to build outcomes through beloved programs such as pool, tower, Stage Night and Carnivarty.

Consider why younger campers felt less respected than older campers and implement strategies to support younger campers' sense of camaraderie.

Help campers learn how to talk with their friends about important things.

Train staff in more detail about how to promote friendship skills among campers, and compare this added emphasis to campers' friendship skills in 2016.

Explore how staff and volunteers can intentionally program for campers' feelings of safety and camaraderie.



## APPENDIX

### Differences in responses to specific questions

#### What about AGE?

There were some statistically significant but small differences between older and younger campers on their answers to many of questions, but given the large number of camper respondents, these small differences are likely to emerge. The differences were of small magnitude, so there is nothing to recommend for changes to the Camp program. However, there were significant differences in the Camaraderie outcome between younger and older campers, as discussed earlier.

#### What about UNITS?

There were some statistically significant and small- (.3-.4) and moderate- (.5-.6) sized differences between units on camper responses to the questions. Specifically, the unit of the campers seemed to make a small difference to their responses to these questions:

- It was hard to make friends at Camp
- I felt respected at Camp

There were moderate sized differences between the Yellow and Purple units on these Friendship Skills questions:

- Talk to friends about things that are important to me (Yellow: 2.31, Purple: 1.63)
- Find ways to meet people who I want to be friends with (Yellow: 2.49, Purple: 1.89)

Otherwise, there were no major differences between units on camper outcomes.

#### What about SESSIONS?

There were some statistically significant and small- and moderate-sized differences between sessions on camper responses.

- I saw other campers get treated meanly or made fun of: Session 8 (2.5) was moderately less than Session 7 (3.8) ( $d = .56$ )
- People were nice to each other at Camp: Session 8 (4.7) was moderately higher than Sessions 3, 4, 7, and 9 (all 4.3) ( $d = .44-.49$ )
- I felt left out at Camp: Session 9 (2.8) was somewhat higher than sessions 3 and 4 (both 2.4) ( $d = .46-.48$ )
- I liked my counselors: Session 2 (4.6) was somewhat lower than sessions 5, 6, and 9 (all 4.9) ( $d = .35-.42$ )
- Choose people who would be good to be friends with: Session 2 (1.9) was moderately lower than session 7 (2.4) ( $d = .55$ )

### What about campers arriving by CAR or BUS?

There were some statistically significant but small differences in responses of campers who arrived by car and campers who arrived by bus.

Item	Car	Bus	Cohen's d effect size
It was easy for me to get around Camp	4.32 (SD: .91)	4.48 (SD: .73)	.19
I saw other Campers get treated meanly or made fun of	4.0 (SD: 1.3)	4.22 (SD: 1.1)	.18
There was someone I could talk to if I had a problem	4.7 (SD: .55)	4.59 (SD: .71)	.17
People were nice to each other at Camp	4.32 (SD: .87)	4.47 (SD: .79)	.18
It was hard to make friends at Camp	2.75 (SD: 1.6)	3.09 (SD: 1.7)	.21
I felt respected at Camp	2.97 (SD: 1.8)	3.43 (SD: 1.7)	.26
Choose people who would be good to be friends with	(2.42, SD: .83)	(2.12, SD: .97)	.33

### Camper Scale Performance and Items

Scale	Item	Mean
<b>Safety (range: 1-5)</b> M = 4.54; SD = .45 $\alpha = .684$ Inter-item r range .197 to .571 rAge = .14 (p<.001) rFun = .38 (p<.001)	It was easy for me to get around Camp.	4.45
	The activities were right for my abilities.	4.55
	I got the medical care I needed at Camp.	4.7
	I trusted the nurses and doctors to take care of me.	4.75
	I felt safe at Camp.	4.75
	I saw other Campers get treated meanly or get made fun of.*	1.87
	There was someone I could talk to if I had a problem.	4.62
	People were nice to each other at Camp.	4.42
<b>Camaraderie (range: 1-5)</b> M = 4.37; SD = .57 $\alpha = .659$ Inter-item r range -.014 to .766 rAge = .46 (p<.001) rTransportation = .11 (p<.01) rFun = .19 (p<.001)	I felt left out at Camp.*	1.44
	It was hard to make friends at Camp.*	2.55
	I got along with the other campers in my cabin.	4.54
	I felt respected at Camp.	3.69
	I had someone to talk to at Camp.	4.72
	I felt connected to others at Camp.	4.53
	I felt like I belonged at Camp.	4.68
	I liked my counselors.	4.82



Scale	Item	Mean
Friendship skills (range: -1 – 3) M = 2.22; SD = .8 $\alpha = .957$ Inter-item r range .508 to .877 rFun = .41 ( $p < .001$ )	Choose people who would be good to be friends with.	2.13
	Talk to friends about things that are important to them.	1.97
	Listen carefully to things that my friends tell me.	2.25
	Talk to friends about things that are important to me.	2.0
	Get to know more things about my friends.	2.4
	Understand my friends' feelings.	2.08
	Understand my friends' emotions.	2.09
	Trust my friends.	2.29
	Be trusted by my friends.	2.32
	Enjoy being with my friends.	2.55
	Help my friends to have a good time when they are with me.	2.3
	Find ways to meet people who I want to be friends with.	2.22
	Get to know people who I might want to be friends with.	2.27
	Find friends who like many of the same things I like.	2.17
Fun (range: 0-3) M = 2.62; SD = .38	19 day and evening programs (e.g., cabin chat, pool, horses, arts & crafts, Carnivarty).	

\* Item reverse-scored

## Regression Analyses

Only statistically significant results are reported.

Predictor	Outcome	Relationship	R <sup>2</sup>
Age	Safety	$b = .14$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 768) = 15.3$	.02
	Camaraderie	$b = .46$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 768) = 202.05$	.21
	Program Fun	$b = -.14$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 768) = 16.25$	.02
Program Fun	Safety	$b = .38$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 772) = 132.47$	.15
	Camaraderie	$b = .17$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 772) = 27.74$	.04
	Friendship Skills	$b = .41$ ( $p < .001$ ), $F(1, 505) = 103.31$	.17
Transportation	Camaraderie	$b = .11$ ( $p < .01$ ), $F(1, 504) = 6.06$	.01