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## **Aetna Foundation Awards \$100,000 Grant to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp**

*Funds Support Programs for Children and Families Coping with Sickle Cell Disease  
as well as Camp's Research and Evaluation Efforts*

**NEW HAVEN, CONN., September 18, 2014** – Children and their families facing sickle cell disease are able to experience special programming offered by The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, thanks to a \$100,000 leadership grant from the Aetna Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Aetna (NYSE: AET). The grant also serves to support Camp's ongoing research and evaluation efforts, allowing the organization to better understand the impact of its programming on families served.

The recent Aetna Foundation grant complements long-time support from Aetna and its employees. Since 2009, Aetna has sponsored the organization's Camp Challenge Ride initiative, helping raise more than \$2 million. Additionally, several hundred Aetna employees volunteer annually to ready Camp for its year-round programs. Mark Bertolini, Aetna's chairman, CEO and president, serves on Camp's board of directors.

The Aetna Foundation funding is helping Camp provide comprehensive services free of charge to children afflicted with sickle cell disease, who make up nearly a third of the camper population. The programs include summer camp sessions and family retreat weekends at the Camp's facility in Ashford, Conn., as well as visits to children hospitalized throughout the Northeast.

"At The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, children with serious health conditions can enjoy being a kid, gain valuable skills in managing their disorder and build a life-changing network of support," said Garth Graham, president of the Aetna Foundation. "The result is a powerful experience that can empower kids with sickle cell disease to lead healthier lives. We are pleased to be able to help The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp strengthen its efforts to reach children grappling with this difficult chronic condition."

Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disorder that changes normally round red blood cells into a sickle or crescent shape. These can get stuck in blood vessels, blocking normal blood flow, which can lead to serious infections, intense pain episodes and organ failure. Infants inherit the disease when both parents are carriers of the sickle cell trait and may start exhibiting symptoms as early as four months of age. The lifelong disease is most prevalent among African Americans and affects about 1 in 500 African-American newborns.

Camp serves children with sickle cell disease at seven out of its nine summer sessions, with two sessions devoted specifically for children coping with the illness. While at Camp, children receive round-the-clock medical care, disease-management skills, and facilitated peer interactions. The program provides universally accessible activity areas that help campers increase their self-confidence and bolster their feelings of being in control.

"The Aetna Foundation's grant will help us provide 'a different kind of healing' to children and families coping with this chronic disease, a group that is frequently underserved," said Ray Shedd, senior development officer, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. "Through their generosity, the Aetna Foundation is also helping support Camp's research and evaluation efforts, which allows us to better understand the impact of our programming and enhance programs for all the families we are so privileged to serve."

Camp's research efforts are designed to provide insight into the difference Camp makes on the lives of families and how those positive outcomes can be replicated in new programs and deepened in existing programs. It looks at camper and parent satisfaction, as well as overall programmatic outcomes.

**About the Aetna Foundation**

The Aetna Foundation, Inc. is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. (NYSE: AET). Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed more than \$445 million in grants and sponsorships. As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who have volunteered 3.4 million hours since 2003. For more information, visit [www.AetnaFoundation.org](http://www.AetnaFoundation.org).

**About Aetna**

Aetna is one of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, serving an estimated 45 million people with information and resources to help them make better informed decisions about their health care. Aetna offers a broad range of traditional, voluntary and consumer-directed health insurance products and related services, including medical, pharmacy, dental, behavioral health, group life and disability plans, and medical management capabilities, Medicaid health care management services, workers' compensation administrative services and health information technology products and services. Aetna's customers include employer groups, individuals, college students, part-time and hourly workers, health plans, health care providers, governmental units, government-sponsored plans, labor groups and expatriates. For more information, see [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com) and the [2014 Aetna story](#) about how Aetna is helping to build a healthier world.

**About The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp**

Founded in 1988 by Paul Newman, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp is a community dedicated to providing “a different kind of healing” to seriously ill children and their families through a variety of year-round programs. The Camp delivers fun, friendship and a healthy dose of mischief through its signature summer program and weekend sessions at the Camp facility in Ashford, Conn. as well as outreach to hospitals, clinics and communities across the Northeast. All services are free of charge. For more information, visit <http://www.holeinthewallgang.org>.

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