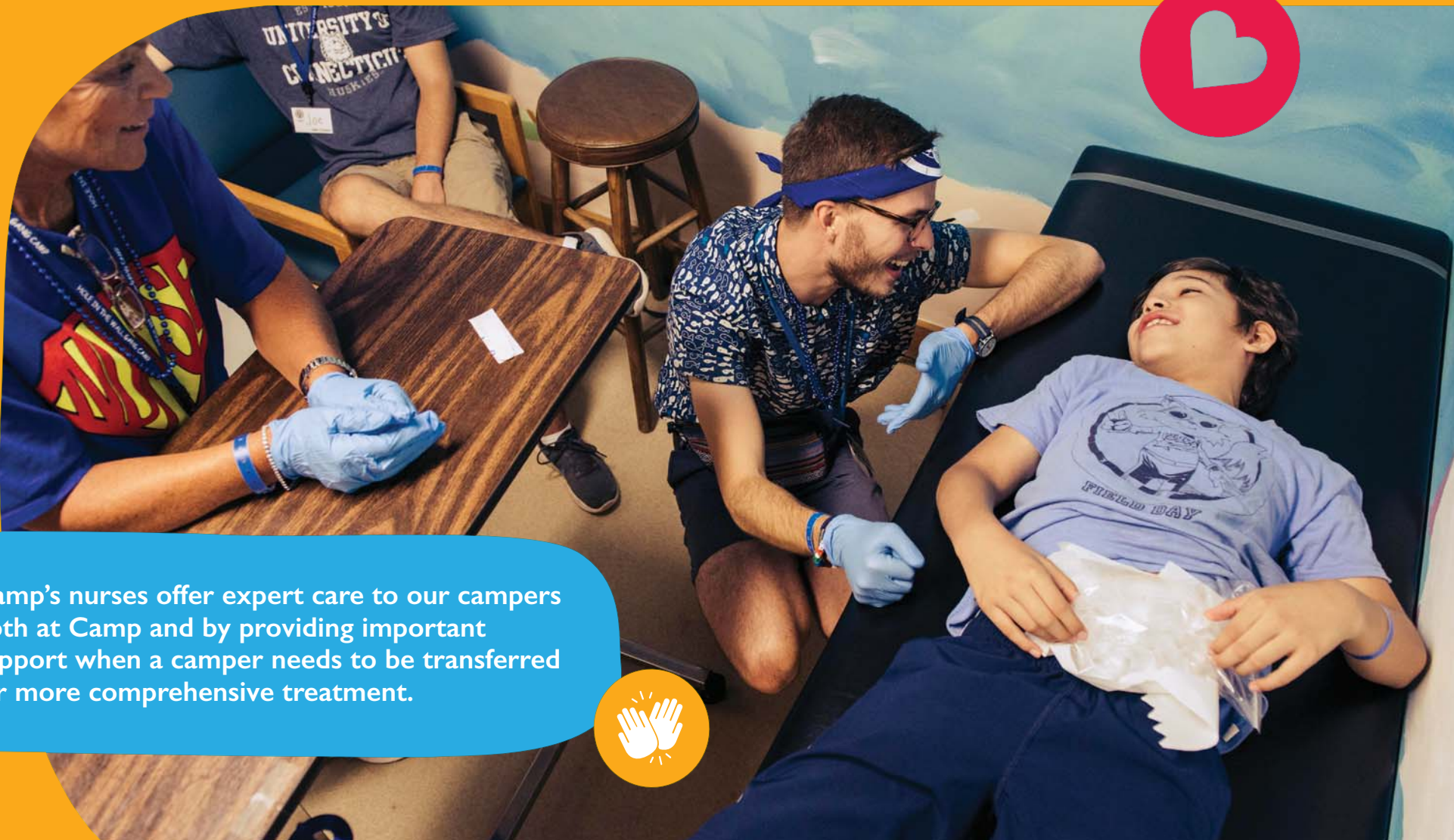




THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP

# GAZETTE

AUTUMN 2024



Camp's nurses offer expert care to our campers both at Camp and by providing important support when a camper needs to be transferred for more comprehensive treatment.



## A CONTINUATION OF CARE

**When a Camper Has Acute Medical Needs at Camp, Hole in the Wall Is There Every Step of the Way.**

One of the things that makes Hole in the Wall so special is that it is so much more than a place in Connecticut. Campers and families can find Camp hope and magic in their hometowns, in the hospital and even through the mail all throughout the year. And when that support is most needed, a friendly face is never far.

While campers and families excitedly look forward to their time at the summer program, sometimes their medical needs require them to leave early to get the care that they need. But when that happens, Camp is right there by their side.

With safety guiding all that happens at Camp, there is an extensive protocol in place for when a camper becomes acutely ill during the summer program. When a child comes into the infirmary with an emergent issue, they are assessed and continually monitored to ascertain the severity of their condition. And while the infirmary is well-equipped for many emergencies, something that could escalate quickly warrants a trip to Connecticut Children's Medical Center, where they can receive the most comprehensive care.

"Our infirmary has incredible diagnostic capabilities and is often faster than the emergency room in identifying those children with acute needs," said Emily Ring, Nursing Director at Hole in the Wall. "While the goal is for campers to remain at Camp, when illness severity warrants a transfer, we always ensure there is a nurse or child life specialist who accompanies the camper in the ambulance, who can share relevant information with the hospital and make certain there is a smooth transition."

And while having to leave Camp is disappointing, Hole in the Wall never leaves the child, starting with their counselor, who stays with them throughout their time in the infirmary, on the way to the hospital, and even in the hospital, until a parent is able to join them.

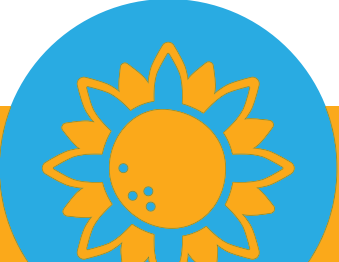


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Cover Story continued



Once at Connecticut Children’s, campers find often familiar faces, with doctors, nurses and child life specialists who have volunteered at Camp and can bond with them over their shared experiences.

Thanks to an internal communications network, the Hospital Outreach and Family Outreach teams are also notified when a camper leaves for Connecticut Children’s and both teams jump into action. With Hospital Outreach specialists onsite just about every day, the Central New England team is ready to bring some Camp magic right to the camper’s bedside.

“One of the things that makes our program so unique is that we do a continuation of care,” said Jimmy Guity, Hospital Outreach Program Regional Manager, Central New England. “Whenever a camper is admitted, we will see them that day. We’ll do a Camp activity and have conversations about Camp. It’s a warm handoff so that the camper feels comfortable.”

Family Outreach also is at the ready and will reach out to the camper family to discuss ways Hole in the Wall can bring them a little cheer during what can be a difficult time. Often times, this means the team will pack up a care package filled to the brim with Camp goodies, games and crafts designed to brighten up the child’s day. It’s a small gesture that means the world to that child.

If you’d like to learn more about Camp programming, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org).

FROM THE CEO

Summer is always a special time at Hole in the Wall. Our location in Connecticut is alive with laughter and joy; hospital hallways are filled with Camp energy and excitement, and families partake in a plethora of activities right in their homes and hometowns. This year, the only difference was that even MORE children and families were able to join in the fun.

Our summer program welcomed more than 700 participants for a week of hope and healing, including 100+ adolescent and young adult participants who grew in their confidence and leadership skills. Thousands of patients, parents, caregivers and siblings created healing memories through Camp Days, Slime Days and bedside interactions in hospitals all across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. And more than 1,500 campers and family members found connection and respite during CampOut events on the mini golf course, in the bowling alley, at baseball games and during caregiver only activities.

None of this would be possible without our caring community of friends who put their faith in us. We are grateful for each and every person, corporation, family and friend who help make “a different kind of healing”® possible.

James Canton, CEO

*Jimmy Canton*



SADDLE UP FOR CAMP

What could be better than relaxing at the beach with good friends and a tasty hot dog? Well, what if you were also helping children with serious illnesses and their families experience “a different kind of healing”?

The Y’s Men of Westport/Weston have found this winning formula with an annual Hot Dog Roast at Compo Beach South in Westport that supports Hole in the Wall. Since 2018, this group of dedicated friends led by event organizer Jon Fox have raised more than \$36,000 for our brave children and families. The 2024 event welcomed so many people that the hot dogs ran out!

“We had this picnic on the beach every summer,” Jon said of how the event got started. “I thought, ‘why don’t we do something good for somebody with this event.’ So, we got the hotdogs donated and put out a bucket to raise money for Hole in the Wall. My group enjoys it and raising some more money for Camp is a wonderful thing. We will do it again next year.”

The Y’s Men of Westport/Weston is an organization of retired or semi-retired men who gather together to share their experiences and hear from prominent speakers. They also participate in social activities and volunteer for and support various community programs, including Hole in the Wall.

“We are so grateful to Jon Fox and the Y’s Men for their friendship to Camp,” said Jarrod Zwirko, director of community partnerships for Hole in the Wall. “Jon’s inspirational leadership has rallied this awesome community to our side and provided much needed support for our programming. We are lucky to count him among our Camp family.”

If you’d like to learn more about becoming a Camp FUNraiser, email [FUNraiser@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:FUNraiser@holeinthewallgang.org) or visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/FUNraiser](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/FUNraiser).



This year’s Y’s Men Hot Dog Roast brought together the Westport Community to support Hole in the Wall



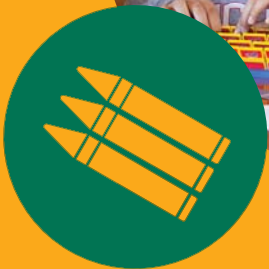


# FAMILY FLATS

Carl and Aurora first came to Camp earlier this year for a Family Weekend with their son, Elijah. And though they are new to the Camp community, Hole in the Wall has already had a big impact on the family.

“We heard about the Family Weekend through the Hospital Outreach Program,” Aurora shared. “Elijah loved it. This is the only place he catches fish. Elijah caught 13 fish when we came here in May.”

Soon after, Carl and Aurora came to a Parent & Caregiver Retreat Weekend at the Heritage Hotel in Southbury, Conn. It was an opportunity for them to connect with each other as well as other caregivers in a relaxed and fun environment, without children.



“The Parent & Caregiver Retreat was our first night alone together since Elijah was diagnosed,” Aurora said. “We had a great time.”

There were plenty of opportunities to let their hair down, with time to use the hotel pool, create in arts & crafts and woodshop, and even a fun silent disco, but the heart of the weekend were the sessions just for moms and ones just for dads, where everyone could connect about their shared experiences.

“When we first walked in, a lot of the men didn’t want to talk – I was one of them,” Carl shared. “You don’t have friends who you can really talk to. I walked out of there so grateful that we did come. It was so sobering and humbling to hear some of their stories.”

And several of the families who attended the Parent & Caregiver retreat just reconnected at a Fall Family Weekend at Camp. It was an opportunity to rekindle their bonds and build their community of support.

“We try to stay connected with the families we met here,” Aurora said. It’s been so helpful to share resources and learn from every parent. I wish more parents would take a chance and be open to the retreat.”

**If you’d like to learn more about programming to support parents and caregivers, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/parent-programs](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/parent-programs).**

*Aurora and Elijah enjoy some time playing games at a Spring Family Weekend.*



# PARDNER PROFILE

Though he was never a camper, even as a child, Tim Consilvio knew there was something special about Hole in the Wall. It might have been watching campers the same age as him hit the stage when he attended the Fandango Benefit Gala, and realizing how lucky he was. Or maybe it was the puppy his family won in the Gala Auction. But whatever it was, Camp has had a lasting impact on him, and he remains involved to this day.

“Camp always stuck with me, even going back to my memories from the 90s,” Tim said. “You are hooked the second you jump in.”

Since becoming more involved again with Hole in the Wall about 10 years ago, Tim has volunteered just about everywhere. Whether at special events, onsite in the summer and at Family Weekends, or even with the Hospital and Family Outreach Programs, Tim has been an important part of the Camp experience for so many in the Hole in the Wall community.

“I see Camp as one big family – the volunteers, the staff, the Camp counselors, the campers, the camper parents – it’s like one big giant community,” Tim shared. “And it brings me joy to be a part of it, to see the campers with their smiles, and the other volunteers, many of whom have become friends. I love seeing campers who remember me. It’s like seeing old friends every time you come to one of the events.”

Tim can often be found helping campers, families and supporters express their creativity with his screen print designs, which have been featured on shirts, bags and more. But his volunteerism extends well beyond that, and Tim has always been ready to jump in with a helping hand anywhere he can provide support.



*Tim’s been creating beautiful screen prints for our campers and event attendees for years!*

“When I first came back, I just dove in,” Tim said. “I didn’t look for a particular event. I just saw one close to me and went. Now, I enjoy going to the hospital and always try to be there. Creating that Camp experience everywhere is something that sticks with me. And after every event, I feel a lot fuller.”

We are grateful to Tim and all of the incredible Camp volunteers who share their time and talents with Hole in the Wall to ensure so many children and families find joy and hope.

**If you’d like to learn more about becoming a volunteer, please contact [volunteers@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:volunteers@holeinthewallgang.org).**

MARYLAND Q&A



Maryland Camp Director,  
Nicole Bontrager

As Hole in the Wall moves closer to welcoming families to its new Maryland location, Maryland Camp Director, Nicole Bontrager, shared her hopes and dreams for what programming will look like in the years ahead.



**Q: Can you explain the construction plans for the Maryland site?**

**A:** The Maryland property essentially has two hotel complexes, one built in the 90s and one in the 70s. The construction of the Maryland location is taking place in multiple phases. The first phase is the renovation of the buildings from 90s and the infirmary. All the buildings already exist so we are not starting from scratch, which allows us to get programing started more quickly. As soon as phase one is complete, we will start family programing.

During phase two, we are adding buildings to the site, and potentially knocking down some buildings from the 70s. This is when the site will start to look more like a traditional Camp with separate cabins, dining hall and theater. Once phase two is complete we will start camper independent programing, such as summer sessions.

**Q: There’s been so much exciting activity as the Maryland location proceeds with renovations. What are you most excited about for the opening of the facility?**

**A:** I’m most excited to see our camper families explore the new space together. At the Maryland site, we are intentionally starting with family programing to build trust with parents and caregivers and to reach those families who may have more complex medical needs. We are designing a program that is not only for our campers with serious illness but also their entire family. From toddlers to grandparents, everyone in the family will feel welcome in the space.



**Q: How will the Maryland location take inspiration from the Connecticut location? What lessons have you taken from Connecticut for the Maryland location?**

**A:** In Maryland, our goal is to take the best of our Connecticut programing and mix it with the beauty and goodness that is already here in the Queenstown community. Our family program structure and underlying values will be consistent across the two locations, and anyone volunteering or participating will find both sites similar. If you think of Camp as a cake, Maryland will use the same recipe, but with different frosting.

One of the things we have learned from the Connecticut location is how much whole families benefit from Camp. We hear story after story from parents and caregivers about how much Camp means not only to their children but also to them. Camp is such a unique space to form genuine connections for all ages, and it is with that lesson in mind that we will move forward first with Family Weekend programs in Maryland.



**Q: Will there be any program areas that are entirely unique to the Maryland location? How did you identify and build out those program ideas?**

**A:** Yes! One of the programs that we have done some testing on is crabbing. The eastern shore of Maryland is known for its blue crabs, and it turns out you can catch them right off our river dock. It’s a community pastime that makes sense for us to include as a way to showcase something that is unique to the area. We plan on this being part of our nature program, and don’t worry, our crabs will all be safely released back into the river when we are done.

Maryland is also going to be testing out a 3-D printing program area. The space we have available during phase one is smaller than what we have in Connecticut, so we were looking for a program with a small footprint to supplement the options in woodshop. We look forward to seeing what our campers create!

**Q: Who is the new location going to serve? What will be unique to make it possible to serve children with even more complex diagnoses?**

**A:** Like the Connecticut location, the Maryland location will continue to serve children diagnosed with cancer, sickle cell disease, and certain metabolic disorders. In addition to these diagnostic groups, we will be identifying several under-served rare and ultra rare diseases that are new to Camp. More specific information on qualifying diagnoses will be available as we approach opening.

The family programing model allows us to bring in children who need more extensive care, as their parents will be with them throughout the weekend. Additionally, for the phase two build, a lot of thought is being put into the layouts and functionality of our buildings and walkways. We are designing to accommodate increased use of mobility devices, children who need to wear or carry medical devices, and children who require more intensive health maintenance, such as dialysis. What is so beautiful about this site is that we are using the combined knowledge of not only the Connecticut site, but of all the SeriousFun camp programs around the world to build the best possible facility.



**Architectural rendering of the future Maryland Location.**

# SUMMER 2024

Join us for a walk down memory lane with some of our favorite summer moments. From baseball games to bowling alleys, there were plenty of opportunities for campers and families to find connection and play with Family Outreach. Onsite, the summer program welcomed more than 700 campers, young adults and siblings, and even the UCONN Women's Basketball Team, for a "hole" lot of magic. And Hospital Outreach brought thousands of joyful experiences to children through Camp Days, Slime Days and the 10th anniversary of Camp Week at CHOP. **What an incredible summer!**





## SHERIFF'S SPOTLIGHT

It all began nearly 20 years ago when Travelers started talks about becoming the title sponsor of the PGA TOUR event in Connecticut. With the title sponsorship, Travelers could choose the primary beneficiary for the event, since 100% of the Travelers Championship's net proceeds go to charity. And as the company looked into different organizations in the region, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp rose to the top.

"The mission of Camp is so special," Andy Bessette, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of Travelers, shared. "We went up to the Camp and saw the infirmary, which was impressive, and started conversations with Ray [Lamontagne] and Jimmy [Canton]. It's been a great history."

Shortly after the Travelers Championship began supporting Camp in 2007, the company followed suit, with a specific focus on the Hospital Outreach and Family Outreach programs. And after a 2021 fire at Camp destroyed the building that housed Arts & Crafts and the Woodshop, Travelers and the Travelers Championship immediately stepped forward to offer support with a \$1 million matching pledge to inspire the community to contribute to the rebuild. In fact, Camp's CEO, Jimmy Canton, recalls that the first call he received after hearing about the fire was from Andy, who asked how he and Travelers could help. Over the years, Travelers has donated more than \$6 million to Camp, while the Travelers Championship has donated more than \$4.5 million, providing tens of thousands of children and family members the opportunity to experience "a different kind of healing."

"The longstanding support of Travelers and the Travelers Championship has been nothing short of game changing for us," Jimmy said. "Their generous care, which extends from the executive leadership throughout the entirety of the organization, allows us to dream the biggest dreams possible to bring joy and hope to those most in need. The added volunteerism from their employees and awareness generated from the Travelers Championship makes this partnership so special and impactful. Camp couldn't do what it does without friends like Travelers."

Each year, hundreds of Travelers employees come to the Connecticut location and most recently the new Maryland location for Helping Hands Work Days, doing a variety of tasks to get the facilities ready to welcome campers and families. It is an opportunity for team building that the employees are grateful for. Even Andy has enjoyed volunteering with Camp's Hospital Outreach Program, making mischief with some kiddos at Connecticut Children's Hospital.

"We have a culture at Travelers – a caring culture, a respectful culture and an appreciative culture that reflects us as a company," Andy said. "Volunteerism is a part of that culture. Our employees love going out to Camp to do whatever is needed. They are all so proud and come back humbled by how they are helping kids who are seriously ill. Knowing we've played some small part in bringing happiness and joy to so many kids is really inspiring, and it's a win-win."

"Workplace culture starts at the top," Jimmy said. "Andy continues to inspire his colleagues to be kind, generous and community minded, leading by example. Not only has he been a champion of Camp within Travelers, but he and his family have been faithful supporters as well. We're so fortunate to have Andy and all of Travelers in our corner."

**If you'd like to learn more about becoming a corporate partner at Hole in the Wall, contact Andrea Keefe, director of corporate and foundation relations, at [andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org).**



**Andy Bessette has been a longstanding friend to Camp.**



**Travelers employees volunteer at Hole in the Wall in a multitude of ways, including stuffing backpacks for every one of our campers.**

# BENEFIT EVENTS

On September 28, 2024, more than 300 Hole in the Wall supporters gathered in Ashford for A Vaudeville Camp Fandango where they enjoyed an afternoon packed with entertainment and plenty of inspiring moments. Thanks to the incredible community, who supported both onsite and from home, this year’s event raised more than \$1.25 million for Camp’s growing programs.

New this year, leading up to the event, Camper Correspondents, Daniela and Nate, got the Gala excitement brewing, sharing sneak peeks of the upcoming event and live and silent auctions on Hole in the Wall’s social media channels. They continued to report live from the Gala, sharing funny moments, like Oreo races with Camp friend and actress Melissa Joan Hart, and heartfelt interviews with event attendees.

Festivities kicked off under sunny skies on a perfect autumn day as a cool breeze fluttered leaves and anticipation through a transformed downtown Camp. Food trucks, including Hungry Lion, Rustic Streets and The Big Green Pizza Truck, tempted guests with delicious offerings while Shake Shack served up frozen treats. Camp Board Member Lissy Newman wowed with her musical stylings, keeping things lively while guests gathered with friends and made memories to last at the photo booth.

As the day continued, the silent and live auctions sparked some fierce competition for hotly sought after items, including a 1965 World Series Game 1 Ticket Stub autographed by Hall of Famer and Camp Board Member Sandy Koufax, a weekend buyout of the Granville House in Great Barrington, Mass and a private “White Truffle” dinner for 12 with Chef Nick Anderer in New York City. The enthusiasm was palpable as auctioneer Erin Ward from Star Benefit Auctions and journalist and emcee Brian Williams masterfully stoked the bidding and paddles shot into the air. Adding to the auction excitement was Camper Ellie sharing about how Camp impacted her life and the celebration of Ray Lamontagne who has served as Camp’s Board Chair for 25 years. With a funny and tender song from long time Camp friend and clown, Noodle, and an inspirational paddle “Rayse” to support Hole in the Wall programs, it was a meaningful moment recognizing a transformational legacy.

Following the auction, it was time for the Fandango performance, which opened with the presentation of this year’s “Most Wanted” award to Matt and Kathy Sheeleigh for their support over nearly 30 years! As nine talented campers took the stage, it became clear that this would be a show to remember. Campers Ben, Cameron, Imani, Jayla, Leyma, Quinn, Sky, Vansh and Violet stole the spotlight as they performed alongside celebrity friends including Sherz Aletaha, Jay Armstrong Johnson, Melissa Joan Hart, Adrianna Hicks, Ana Cruz Kayne, Lissy Newman, John Rapson, Elizabeth Stanley, Jessica Vosk, the Wonderful Watson, Brian Williams and Luke Wilson! With powerful songs, hilarious skits and moving segments, including reflections focused on community and Family Weekends featuring the Sullivan and Montera Families, it was an entertaining reminder of the power of philanthropy.

When guests exited the performance and returned to downtown Camp, they found a dinner buffet and variety of dessert options, including crepes and warm donuts, under twinkling lights on the Dining Hall green. The night wound down with music from Nine6teen and time to relax and reflect on the day’s events.



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# HOP ON THE GO

Ten years ago, Hole in the Wall’s Hospital Outreach Program (HOP)<sup>SM</sup> took over the hallways of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) for the first time for five full days of Camp fun and activities. Since then, Camp Week @ CHOP has become a beloved annual event, one that patients and hospital staff alike look forward to the rest of the year.

Camp Week kicks off each year with an opening campfire where patients make thematic crafts and learn some Camp traditions. As the week unfolds, children and families enjoy Carnivary – a carnival/party packed with games and activities – and Wood-CHOP500 where wooden cars are decorated and raced in the hospital atrium. And of course, no Camp Week would be complete without Slime Day, filled with ooey gooey goodness! Every corner of the hospital is filled with unit pride, as posters adorn the walls and cheers echo through the hallways. But the impact extends beyond just bringing some fun into the hospital.

“It’s a distraction from where they are and what they are going through,” Elana Brewer, senior director of child life, education and creative arts therapy at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, shared. “When you are able to not focus on your illness, wholistically, your body does a better job healing itself. It heals the spirit, heals the mind and heals the body in ways that are not happening at this level the other weeks of the year. For the staff, similarly, it’s an energy boost. It’s fun to come to work. They can engage with

the children in ways that are more social and fun which reduces staff stress in the work that they do every day. And the impact extends to the entire family, without a doubt.”

Camp Week has become a “all hands on deck” event, with Camp staff traveling from all of the HOP regions to support the festivities. Additionally, the entire child life team at CHOP chips in to bring the magic of Hole in the Wall to every corner of one of the largest pediatric hospitals in the country. And the event simply wouldn’t be possible without the more than 40 volunteers who donate their time to help make every member of the CHOP community feel the joy and hope of Camp. In total, this year’s Camp Week shared 2,600 healing interactions with patients, family members and visitors over five incredible days.

**If you’d like to learn more about how HOP is sharing “a different kind of healing” with children in hospital settings, contact Michele “Gill” McKenna, Director of Hospital Outreach at [michele.mckenna@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:michele.mckenna@holeinthewallgang.org) or visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/hospitaloutreach](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/hospitaloutreach).**



to see how Camp Care extends beyond the Connecticut location.

# LOOK INSIDE

a serious fun camp



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