



THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP

GAZETTE

SPRING/SUMMER
2024



**Ray Lamontagne
with Camp Founder
Paul Newman**



Much has changed at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp since it was founded in 1988, but many things have remained constant. Founder Paul Newman's vision and innovative spirit remain the guiding force for all that is done at Camp. Hole in the Wall will always seek out new ways to bring "a different kind of healing" to ever more children and families facing the most challenges from serious illness. And Ray Lamontagne continues to drive the organization to turn bold dreams into reality.

Ray, who has served as Camp's Board Chair for 25 years, has been involved with Hole in the Wall since the very beginning, serving as a trusted advisor to Paul when he was first starting the organization. Over the years, Ray has seen it all, as the organization grew from a summer program serving 288 children to now serving tens of thousands of children and family members annually through a variety of year-round programs.

"The original idea was that children could enjoy the youth that was stolen from them, but it became obvious that something more important than that was going on," Ray said of the start of Camp. "The kids were getting other benefits out of their experience at Camp. Parents would come back and come up to us and say, 'thank you for Camp.' Then we started getting parents who asked if there was any chance the siblings could also come to a session."

And that's how Camp began to grow - through programming suggested by parents, campers and staff. First, it was the sibling session. Then came Family Weekends, the Hospital Outreach Program (HOP)™, Parent Programs, CampOut, and most recently a Bereavement Program to bring healing to families who have lost a child to serious illness. It's in the organizational DNA to listen - really listen - to our community and then innovate to meet the needs of children and families who are facing isolation and diminished quality of life due to their illness.

"In the almost 40 years of camp, I cannot think of one program suggested by either the staff or the kids or the parents that we have not been able to implement and implement successfully," Ray shared. "Both amazing with regards to the flexibility we have been able to maintain and the fact that we've been able to afford to do so because we've had the support of so many wonderful donors. And Newman would have been so proud of what we are doing."



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He would have been saying hooray to these new suggestions coming along and would have been so excited to see how his vision has expanded beyond his original concept.”

Today, Camp is undertaking its boldest effort since the original location opened nearly four decades ago. Thanks to a generous donation from The Aspen Institute, Hole in the Wall will open a new location on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. This location will initially focus on serving the family unit – specifically those in the rare disease community whose medical challenges may be too complex for children to attend Camp independently. Like all previous programs, it answers an existing need in our community – providing additional opportunities for family programming, which is filled to capacity in the Connecticut location, while also bringing programming closer to those families who have been served for years by HOP but are too far to realistically travel to Connecticut for onsite programs. It also will address a regional void in programming, as no other comparable camp is currently available in the area for children with serious illnesses and their families.

“We should be able start with family programs within the next two years,” Ray said. “Meanwhile, we’ve increased our outreach of the HOP program by starting in hospitals in that area, which is just a terrific synergy with what we want to do. The HOP staff will know a lot of the kids that will be coming to Camp, and they will be familiar with the doctors and nurses in those hospitals, so we’ve already begun to lay the groundwork for a good working relationship.”

In the coming year, Ray will transition from his role as Board Chair to lead the comprehensive campaign that will provide funding not just for this new location, but for all Camp programming. With Ray’s ongoing leadership, Hole in the Wall will continue to provide the best possible programming for our children and families while simultaneously raising the funds needed to build out the full Maryland location. Looking ahead, Hole in the Wall will continue to do what it does best, following our Founder’s example to dream the biggest dreams possible to bring “a different kind of healing™” to those we are so privileged to serve.



FROM THE CEO



It’s been a joy-filled spring at Hole in the Wall, as we’ve shared healing moments with thousands of children and families all across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. On site, Family Weekends were completely full, with a waitlist of families excited to experience the magic of Hole in the Wall. In the hospitals, events filled hallways in all five of our regions, while programming kicked off at Children’s National in Washington DC, welcoming new children, families and medical staff into Camp’s fold. And Family Outreach saw some of its biggest ever events, building community for our families throughout the year. As summer continues, we are thrilled to see growth in our summer and adolescent and young adult programs, as we expect to welcome nearly 800 children with serious illnesses and their siblings for a week of hope, laughter and “a different kind of healing.” None of this would be possible without our community of friends, supporters and families. Thank you for your continued faith in us and for helping us to share our Founder’s vision with even more children and families.

James Canton, CEO

Jimmy Canton

BENEFIT EVENTS

On Saturday, April 6, the Beantown Bash celebrated a significant milestone – 30 years of friendship to Hole in the Wall. Over those three decades, the event has raised more than \$23 million thanks to the leadership of Ken’s Foods and the Beantown Bash community, with an additional \$1.77 million raised at this year’s event!

Spanning three floors of Boston Children’s Museum, the event kept the more than 650 guests in attendance entertained with museum exhibits and activities like Rad Racers, Put Me In, Coach, Football Challenge, Crafts, Amazing Animal Ambassadors and more! Will Bradley-King, Christian Elliss and Dont’a Hightower from the Patriots were on hand to sign autographs while mascots Pat Patriot, Wally and Tessie posed for photos. Hors d’oeuvres, dinner buffets and cocktails were available throughout the venue, and outside, a heated Beer Garden tent offered culinary stations, a full bar and craft beers.

A spirited silent auction spurred friendly competition for items including center court Celtics tickets, a Nantucket getaway and an autographed Tom Brady jersey. Cheers to 30 years of the Beantown Bash!



HOP ON THE GO



For children in the hospital, time at summer camp can seem like an impossible dream. Endless treatments, tests and ongoing medical concerns fill days that are often lonely and scary. And though leaving the hospital for a week of summer fun may not always be a possibility, Hole in the Wall ensures the joy and hope of Camp reaches into the hospital walls through Hospital Outreach Program (HOP) Camp Days that are held in all HOP regions.

Recently, the Boston HOP team hosted a Paint “Pahty” at Boston Children’s Hospital, one of several Camp Days they will host at the location this year. The day kicked off with a drop-in craft “pahty” held in The Hale Family Center for Families, followed

by a live show streamed from Seacrest Studio. There were 175 kits delivered directly to children’s bedsides the day before, which allowed them to paint along from the comfort of their rooms, while many other children came down to the studio to join in the fun in person. The day wrapped up with a Camp for the Caregivers, with 13 participants who joined a Zoom paint class. Caregivers created masterpieces with materials provided by HOP prior to the event, as they shared their knowledge, celebrations and challenges.



“I love seeing Camp programs back in action,” said Miranda Day, MS, MBS, CCLS at Boston Children’s. “My brief moment in the room for Paint Pahty was definitely hopping. Thank you for adding caregiver programs over the years. They are such an important part of the patients and often overlooked.”

Families learn about the activities via advertising posted throughout the hospital hallways, along with information shared directly from hospital and HOP staff. It truly takes a village to ensure as many children as possible can experience the fun and laughter that comes with Camp Days, and they are only made possible by hard work and collaboration between HOP, the Child Life team at the hospital and many dedicated volunteers.

If you’d like to learn more about Hole in the Wall’s Hospital Outreach Program, visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/hospitaloutreach, or email Michele Gill McKenna, Director, Hospital Outreach at michele.mckenna@holeinthewallgang.org.

TRAILBLAZER



In 1993, Erin (Hodne) O’Brien first entered the gates of Camp as a camper, and it left a lasting impact on her. She and her friend, Ellen, a classmate since first grade who was diagnosed with the same disease as Erin, spent four memorable summers together at Hole in the Wall. And this year, in May, Erin and Ellen celebrated their shared Camp history by joining forces to form “Little Red Wagon,” a team participating in the 16th Annual Camp Challenge. Their goal was to raise funds and increase awareness for the Camp that had given them so much.

“The impact of Hole in the Wall continues to run deep within me,” Erin said. “Hole in the Wall heals from the inside out – it nourishes the soul, which is just as vital, if not more so, than healing the body. Today, Camp Challenge brings back a profound sense of excitement and belonging. Just the smell and feel of the overall Camp energy is infectious. The prospect of reliving Camp memories fills me with excitement. And to find myself back in Red 9, the same cabin Ellen and I shared in 1994, is simply astonishing.”

Erin has been participating in Camp Challenge, a family-friendly 5K held each year at Camp to raise funds for programming, for five years. This year, Erin and Ellen jumped on a new opportunity – along with eight of their friends and family – to stay in Cabin Circle the night before the race. They are one of 11 teams this year who raised more than \$2,500 in total and stayed overnight to enjoy some additional activities and events – and experience just a little bit of the magic our campers feel all summer long.

“At Camp, there’s a profound connection among people; it doesn’t matter whether you were a camper, counselor or volunteer, and regardless of how long you have been part of the community,” Erin said. “There’s an innate understanding and empathy that binds everyone together. We connect first through



the heart, and from there, everything else effortlessly falls into place. It’s a haven – a sacred space where you belong and a place where you will always find unwavering support. What I truly enjoy about Camp Challenge is the opportunity to connect with everyone at Camp, whether they’re old friends or new ones.”

Erin also appreciates the accessibility of Camp Challenge – it’s something that anyone can do. And this year, more than 200 runners and walkers proved that, participating alongside Erin and her team to raise an amazing \$120,000 for Camp.

“I just hope that I am able to give back a fraction of what I have received in my life,” Erin said. “You may leave Camp, but Camp never leaves you - it leaves an indelible footprint on your soul, a reminder of the joy, connection and growth experienced there.”

If you want to learn more about Camp Challenge, or becoming a Camp FUNraiser, visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/FUNraiser or email FUNraiser@holeinthewallgang.org.

MEET BREANA



At Hole in the Wall, Breana could be her truest self.



My name is Breana, and I’m a twenty-three-year-old former camper who lives with a rare autoimmune inflammatory disease and two hereditary spastic paraplegia (HSP) genes. My family was unaware of my HSP genes until I was a senior in High School, but Camp had prepared me long before my diagnosis for the fight ahead. See, no one knew what was wrong when I was becoming so much sicker in adolescence. But Camp was there regardless, and I learned a lot from the experiences and wonderful people at Hole in the Wall.

I was twelve when I first entered through those magical Camp gates, and from then until I was seventeen, Camp was my safe place that saved and treated me in ways the best hospitals couldn’t. It gave me a time and place to heal and grow with people who truly understood rare diseases and the medical and emotional challenges I faced. As a twenty-three-year-old woman, I can see that Camp gave me a family with unconditional love, along with the ability to live in my truth and accept my conditions for all they are – all they can do, but also everything I can do despite them.

Nos became yeses at Camp. The towering rock wall would’ve been a definite no in my doctor’s eyes. It was in my mother’s until the counselors made her more comfortable. Little did she know, that yes unlocked much more than just an opportunity to climb a rock wall. It enabled me to realize doctors aren’t always right, and their answers aren’t definite. My mother put enormous trust in Camp and in return, was in tears as her daughter climbed that wall. With every peg that I grasped, I realized I’m stronger than my sickness, and nothing is impossible.

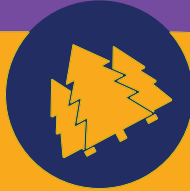
Ten years later, this experience still impacts me tremendously. When high school teachers said pursuing a Criminal Justice degree was not a smart choice because of my health, I said, “No, I’ll make it work. My health can’t hold me back from every job I may want to pursue.” Now, I am one of the youngest inductees in my university to the only Criminal Justice Honor Society, holding an academic excellence award that is only passed out to one student out of more than six hundred. I’ve also been on the Dean’s list each semester, and have been offered job opportunities.

Camp taught me to live in my truth, not to damper my ambitions, and move to the beat of my drum as long as I’m safe and having fun. It is an oasis that, as a child, adolescent and young adult, I still visualize returning to, which helps me in my darkest nights and at times when pursuing my ambitions is challenging. Hole in the Wall gave me the confidence to take back the power not only from my conditions but also from how society labels and views them. I no longer allow perspectives to be made; I help change them with kindness and education. I fight for accommodations in areas that I love the most.

Camp made me comfortable speaking up for my needs and others. I knew because of Camp that I wanted to volunteer and take the kindness and love I felt at Camp out into my community. I have done and will continue to do this, from mentoring and volunteering in high school and university to donating food to the needy and helping others whenever possible. The story doesn’t end when you age out. That’s where the story begins. You can choose to take that magic with you outside those heavenly gates into the world to make a difference that truly makes a “hole” difference to somebody’s life. Just like Camp does to everyone who enters those gates.

FAMILY WEEKENDS

In the fall and spring, nearly 200 families gathered together at Hole in the Wall across 15 Family and Bereavement Weekends where they found respite, healing and connection. They enjoyed time together as a family while forging friendships with others who understand their challenges. And of course, they found plenty of Camp fun and laughter.



FAMILY FLATS



Camper mom, Robin, has always known about The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, having lived nearby her entire life. However, she never expected to be involved until her son, Holden, was diagnosed with Very Severe Aplastic Anemia at just seven years old. It was a life-changing moment, and one that brought the entire family into the Camp community. Initially introduced more formally to Hole in the Wall through the Hospital Outreach Program while Holden was in treatment, the family immediately sought ways to get involved.

“Once you’re blindsided by a critical illness, you learn that you quickly find a tribe of strangers that ‘get it,’ and it helps to embrace your village that forms,” Robin shared. “Camp

provided an entire network of support and ways to still enjoy and participate in special things, even when Holden wasn’t stable enough to participate in anything anywhere else.”

Holden first came to a summer session in 2023, and since then, the family has been to a Family Camp, Family Weekends and multiple CampOut events. And Robin and her husband, Jason, have also been to a Parent and Caregiver Retreat weekend and multiple parent volunteer days. Even Robin’s father, Stephen, has gotten involved, volunteering his time to support Camp activities.

“There are and continue to be memories that stand out every time we participate,” Robin said. “Every memory is a reminder of how Camp just seems to collect the best humans in existence across the board. Every PERSON that participates is special, involved, supported and embraced. If Penny, our daughter, attends, it’s a program that focuses just as much on her as on Holden. We have all bonded so deeply with our people.”

Through Camp, the family has been able to find support, both individually and as a unit. It has provided opportunities for respite and something to look forward to when times feel bleak. But most of all, Hole in the Wall has reminded the family of the power of “a different kind of healing” and of all of the good that is in the world.

“Camp is all the things you didn’t even know you needed when life sometimes looks it’s darkest,” Robin said. “Camp is the entity in your life that knows what you need before you do. It’s catching your breath, reducing the worry and increasing the support. It’s love, fun and encouragement. It reclaims humanity and separates the illness as the umbrella that overshadows your life. Camp reminds you that magic still exists.”

If you’d like to learn more about Hole in the Wall programs that support the entire family, visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/programs.



SHERIFF SPOTLIGHT

The Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation is all about bringing joy to children, just like Camp. And when the foundation turned its attention to supporting programming in the summer camp space – with a focus specifically on combatting hunger and illness – partnering with Hole in the Wall was a perfect fit.

“As we look at the programs we fund, they provide typical activities kids facing hunger and illness miss out on,” said Meaghan Duff, senior manager with the Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation. “These programs provide joy, a place where kids can go and forget for a bit that they are sick. They can enjoy activities and do all the things that their friends are doing. Camp does that in a unique way where kids and families are able to escape the reality of being in treatment and just enjoy time having fun together.”

Since 2017, the Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation has provided \$215,000 in funding to Hole in the Wall, supporting a variety of programs including Camp’s summer program, Hospital Outreach Program and Family Weekends. Their friendship has ensured thousands of children with serious illnesses have been able to find friendship, hope and healing.

“Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood’s steadfast friendship has been instrumental in bringing ‘a different kind of healing’ to children and families across all of our programming,” said Andrea Keefe, director of corporate and foundation relations at Hole in the Wall. “We are so grateful for their incredible support which helps provide fun and meaningful experiences to our campers and their families.”

Joy in Childhood is a unique philanthropic initiative, funded by the generosity of Dunkin’ franchisees, who also nominate organizations in their communities to receive funds. It is an opportunity that the franchisees are excited about and proud to be a part of.

If you’d like to learn more about Hole in the Wall’s corporate and foundation partnership program, please contact Andrea at andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org or visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/get-involved/#partner.





PARDNER PROFILE

In 1998 Peg Carlson dropped her daughter Emily off at Camp for her very first session as a camper. She came back changed – happier, more positive and able to take on whatever came her way. Inspired by her daughter’s transformation, Peg, along with her husband Pete, began volunteering for Hole in the Wall that very year, with Em soon to follow.

The family continued to volunteer together until November 2009, when Em passed away. Surrounded by Camp love and support, Peg and Pete have continued to volunteer in a variety of ways – at the Gala, Beantown Bash, Camp Challenge, Bandit Roundup and more. And Peg soon found herself volunteering in the Camp store with more and more frequency. In fact, she was instrumental in the opening of the new Camp Store in the recently built Creative Complex.

“I love it,” Peg said of volunteering in the Camp store. “I am a very organized person, and one of my tasks in getting the new store up and running was setting up the stock rooms. I know what we have and where it is. If you need a color or size, I’m your girl! Oh, I’ve gotten quite good at folding, too. I love being in the store. I get to see everybody, and people are happy and smiling.”

Peg and her husband also recently began volunteering at Camp’s new Bereavement Program. She participated as a Family Pal for the first time, where she was paired with the same family over the three weekends of the program, building their relationship and bond over the weeks.

“It’s hard to describe what a wonderful community it is,” Peg shared. “A lot of healing goes on – at least the beginning of healing. There is something special about being in a room with people who have gone through what you have. There are no words to describe what it does for us, even as a volunteer. You don’t ever want to go home.”

And just a few weeks ago, Peg took on yet another volunteering adventure, traveling down to the new location in Maryland for a volunteer workday. She was joined by a friend, who took the eight-hour drive with her, along with a cousin who lives in Virginia.

“I thought I could help in Maryland, so I went down, and it was awesome,” Peg said. “I was so impressed; it’s going to be something special. The location is phenomenal, and the history is fascinating. I definitely will be going down to help out again.”

We are so grateful to Peg, Pete and all of our incredible volunteers who make Camp magic possible. **If you’d like to learn more about becoming a volunteer at Hole in the Wall email volunteers@holeinthewallgang.org.**



Peg volunteering at a recent Bereavement Weekend.

A NEW WAY TO SUPPORT HOLE IN THE WALL



You can now support Camp with cryptocurrency donations through The Giving Block, a secure and efficient way to donate using digital currencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum, and more. By embracing crypto donations, Hole in the Wall hopes to make giving more accessible and inclusive. Camp has always been focused on creating fun and transformative experiences for children, and now, with Crypto Giving, we're breaking barriers in the fundraising space as well.

To make a gift of cryptocurrency, visit <https://thegivingblock.com/donate/the-hole-in-the-wall-gang-camp-inc/> or contact Lily Johnson at lilith.johnson@holeinthewallgang.org.



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SAVE THE DATE

Together, we can make a difference for the children with serious illnesses that Camp serves. We hope you will gather with us this fall at one of these fun-filled events to bring magic, joy and healing to those who need it most. Visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/benefitevents for more information or contact our Director of Special Events Jennifer Weeks, at jennifer.weeks@holeinthewallgang.org with any questions.

A VAUDEVILLE CAMP FANDANGO

September 28, 2024

“Raise a little hell” with us at Camp for our Fandango Benefit Gala. Guests will enjoy an afternoon and evening filled with cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, food trucks, interactive culinary stations, spirited silent and live auctions and music, followed by a live show starring Hole in the Wall Campers and celebrity friends. Plus, the recipients of Camp’s 2024 Most Wanted Award will be revealed, and Hole in the Wall will celebrate the innumerable contributions of Ray Lamontagne, as he marks 25 years as Board Chair and prepares to proudly pass along that torch as he transitions into a new role as the chair of Camp’s comprehensive campaign next year.



33RD ANNUAL BIG APPLE BASH

November 9, 2024

Join us in New York City for an unforgettable evening packed with a “hole” lot of fun for the entire family including cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, dinner and dessert buffets, musical performances and so much more. Camp will be returning once again to Tavern on the Green for this action-packed event that will keep guests celebrating into the night.



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