



THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP

GAZETTE

AUTUMN 2025



Camper mom Cindy and daughters Mia, Hannah and Sariah

CONNECTION FOR THE “HOLE” FAMILY

It truly takes a village to make one inspiring camper family’s story possible

Camper mom Cindy’s story begins in 2002, when she decided it was time to become a mom and adopt a child who needed a family. With the support of her family, she looked into where there was great need, and was led to China, where she adopted her first daughter, Katelyn, and decided then and there that she would come back to volunteer at the orphanage as a way of expressing her gratitude.

Over her years returning to China, Cindy again and again opened her heart to other children in need of homes – first a child awaiting surgery for a congenital heart defect. Then a child with Thalassemia, and another child with Thalassemia, starting her own organization specifically to support children with the diagnosis along the way. And then finally, in 2015, she completed her family, adopting a child who faced so many health challenges, they almost wouldn’t let her on the plane to come home to the United States.

Through it all, Cindy surrounded herself with a village of support who made her incredible adoption journey possible and who have helped her navigate the challenges she experienced as a single mother to five children – three of whom faced ongoing health challenges. From the community rallying to her side financially, to Boston Children’s Hospital’s continued advice and medical care, to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp programs, the outpouring from those around her ensured Cindy had the tools she needed for her children.

The family first learned about Hole in the Wall while receiving treatment at Boston Children’s, where they met Hospital Outreach specialist Jeremiah. His crafts, games and good humor were welcome distractions from the monotony of treatment, something the girls could look forward to.

“When we saw him, you would swear Santa walked through the door because the kids were so excited,” Cindy shared. “He had all these different activities to do, and it made transfusions easier.”

Continued on page 2



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IN THIS ISSUE

- From the CEO 2
- Saddle Up For Camp..... 3
- Pardner Profile..... 3
- HOP On the Go..... 4
- Creative Corner 4
- Summer 2025..... 5
- Siblings Need Camp Too..... 6
- Sheriff’s Spotlight 6
- Benefit Events 7
- Maryland Update..... 8



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Cover Story continued



Jeremiah was the first one to mention Hole in the Wall's summer program to the family. But then COVID happened, and the idea of summer Camp quickly fell off the radar. It wasn't until a few years later, when their social worker mentioned Camp again, that the family's interest was piqued. In 2023, her daughters Mia and Hannah attended a summer session.

And the next year, when Cindy learned that her youngest daughter Sariah could also come to Camp, the family attended a Family Weekend together to get Sariah comfortable. She couldn't wait to go back. So in the summer of 2025, Sariah came to Camp for her first summer session, where she met Sylvie, another camper, also adopted from China, with the same diagnosis.

"There was just this unspoken commonality both being from China; both being adopted; and both having a liver transplant," Cindy said. "I don't even think I can put it into words just how meaningful it was. It's remarkable because they feel like they are not alone in the world with what they've gone through and what they are continuing to go through. And they can just be kids, and I don't need to think about the medications and who is going to make sure that happens. It's all taken care of, and I don't need to worry."

And while Sariah and Hannah were at Hole in the Wall this summer, Cindy not only got a break from worrying about who was taking care of her children's care, she also got some TLC for herself when she attended a Parent and Caregiver Retreat Weekend.

"That was just a complete unexpected gift to be able to go and be with the parents," Cindy said. "It was funny, and we cried, and we ate, and we laughed, and we ate, and it was unreal. I just have this enormous amount of gratitude for what you guys do in thinking about the whole family."

If you'd like to learn more about how Hole in the Wall provides wrap-around support to each member of the family, visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/programs/.



FROM THE CEO

Earlier this year, I shared my plans to retire from Hole in the Wall effective May 31, 2026, following 23 years where I had the immense privilege to offer direction for this magical and sacred organization in the role of chief executive officer. And, it has been THIRTY-EIGHT extraordinary years that I have been inspired daily by the brave children and families we serve.

Over those years, I have experienced so much joy and pride being part of the incredible growth of Camp to serve more children and families in new and deeper ways. I am absolutely THRILLED with our current plans to expand Camp's healing impact into the Mid-Atlantic region, and am elatedly looking forward volunteering at our first Maryland Family Camp in May.

As I look ahead to my next few months here at Camp and beyond, my heart is at peace. If I tied my retirement to a moment of quiet, I'd never leave. Camp always should be growing, exploring new ways to bring joy, connection, hope and peace to children with serious illnesses and their loved ones and out into the world.

The first time I met our Founder Paul Newman, he toasted the summer staff the night before our first campers arrived. He held up a glass of Newman's Own lemonade and said, "I've taken it this far. You take it from here. Raise a little hell." What an indescribable privilege it has been to be a part of the movement that took it from there. What a joy, purpose and honor. My heart is filled with gratitude.

I've helped to take it this far. You take it from here. Raise a little hell, a lot of joy and even more love.

Most sincerely,

James Canton, CEO



SADDLE UP FOR CAMP



Founded in 2013, Power of Peace (POP) is a youth-led organization dedicated to promoting peace by pursuing three core goals: eradicating hunger, providing better living conditions, and enabling kids to succeed. The group was started by six middle and high school students — including a former camper who wanted to pay forward their good fortune — and has since grown to include 35 members.

“The founders really liked the work that Hole in the Wall was doing, so they wanted to do whatever they could to help,” said Kameswami Bhamidipati on behalf of POP. “Our kids really appreciate the tours to the facility. It helps them see exactly where the funds go and how they are helping other kids of their own age. They always come away inspired.”

Power of Peace now has 35 members supporting a variety of organizations, including Camp.

Each POP member pledges to raise at least one dollar per day in support of charities that fulfill POP’s goals. Through community events, talent shows, outdoor games and more, the kids raise close to \$20,000 each year, which is shared among charities in the US and in India.



“Through their support of Hole in the Wall for nearly a decade, Power of Peace have proven that there is no age restriction on philanthropy,” said Jennifer Weeks, director of special events at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp. “It is heartening to see youth stepping up to bring joy, hope and a ‘different kind of healing’ to other youth facing some of their most challenging times.”

Power of Peace has consistently demonstrated this kindness and compassion, most recently when they visited Hole in the Wall this past summer. We look forward to their continued friendship.

If you’d like to learn more about becoming a FUNraiser for The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, contact Jennifer at jennifer.weeks@holeinthewallgang.org.



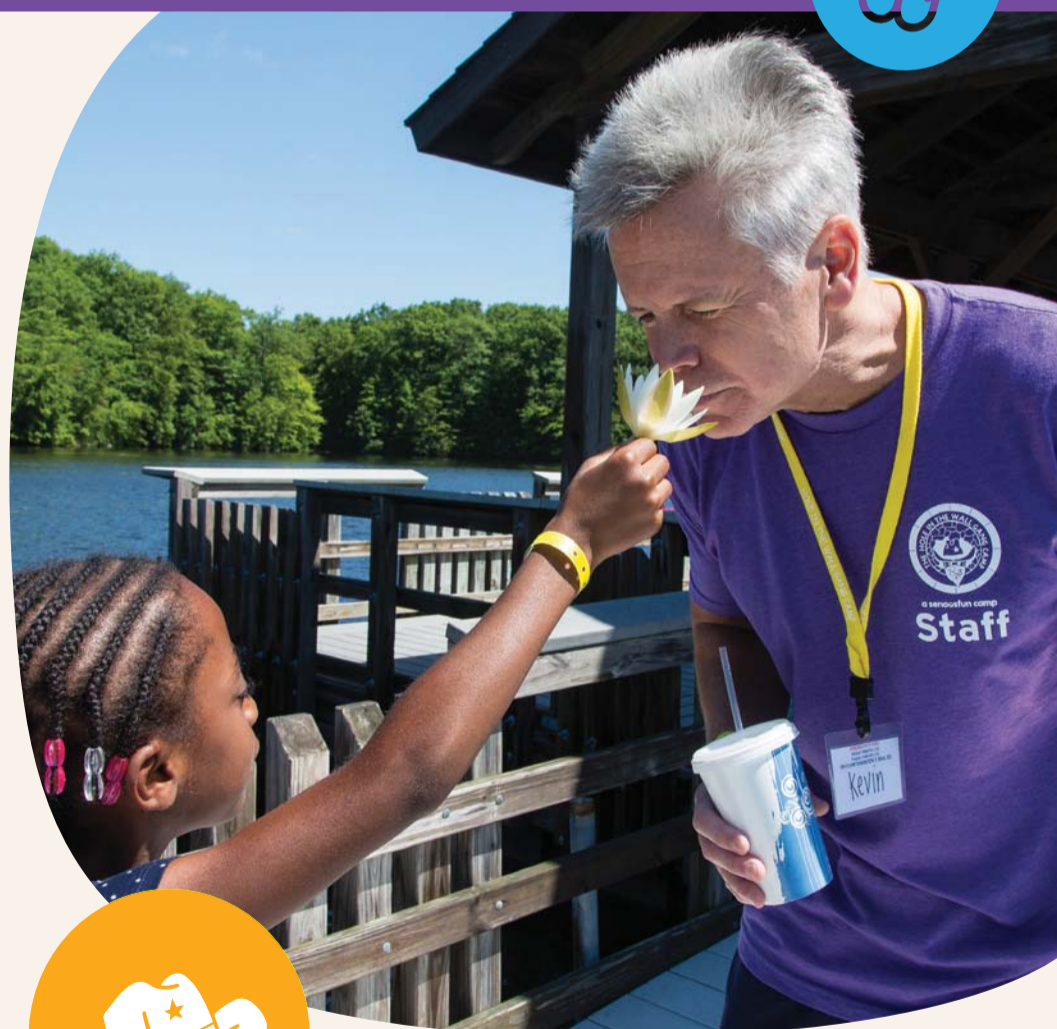
PARDNER PROFILE

In 2008, Kevin Adams had what one might call an “a-ha” moment while watching a TV special celebrating Paul Newman’s life. In the piece was an old interview where Paul was asked, “If you could be King for a day, what would you ask people to do in order to be fully human?” Paul’s response – “Participate, participate.” With those words in mind, Kevin decided to make a difference, and his volunteer adventure at Hole in the Wall began.

“I had always been so struck by what Mr. Newman had done to start the Camp and all of his philanthropic efforts,” Kevin said. “When I saw that special, I thought, ‘what am I waiting for,’ and literally got on the Camp website at that moment. Here I am now, over 15 years later, having volunteered at summer sessions, Family Weekends and the new Bereavement Program; with the Hospital Outreach Program; and at special events and work days through my employer (Travelers).”

Having spent so much time volunteering at Camp, Kevin had some ideas on things that could improve the Camp experience. Acting on his ideas, Kevin generously purchased two wheelchair accessible golf carts, providing improved mobility onsite for campers and guests using wheelchairs. Named after his parents, “Bill’s Buggy” and “Eileen’s Express” are frequently used during the summer program and Family Weekends.

“It is so great to give back and express gratitude for all of our blessings,” Kevin shared. “I think deep down I’d like to try to bring some measure of joy back to kids and their families who are dealing with a serious illness; to let them know they are not alone. We all share in this experience in solidarity with one another.”



Kevin has volunteered at Camp in just about every way possible, including the summer program.

We are so grateful to Kevin and all of Camp’s incredible supporters who share their time, talents and generosity with Hole in the Wall. **If you’d like to learn more about becoming a volunteer for Camp, please contact our volunteer team at volunteers@holeinthewallgang.org.**

HOP ON THE GO



Not every child who comes to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for a summer session has a parent who drops them at Camp. In fact, a great many of our campers arrive on busses, which depart from Camp's hospital partners, providing much needed transportation assistance and ensuring everyone is able to find a way to reach Hole in the Wall. But as any parent who has had a child attend sleep-away camp knows, it can be a little scary dropping off your kiddo, even more so if you aren't able to be onsite.

Understanding this, Camp's Boston Hospital Outreach team found a solution to help ease parent nerves and build camper connections before Camp sessions even get started. Building off of the Camp Day events that the team already hosts each summer at multiple hospital partners, the team started hosting Camp Day Bus Parties at Boston Children's Hospital and Boston Medical Center, gathering all of the campers who will be departing together for a little taste of what's to come.

"The first time we hosted a bus party, it was kind of a happy accident," said Hospital Outreach Specialist Ariel Ford, who has been the mastermind of these events. "We were hosting a Camp Day the same day the bus was leaving, and before the bus left, the kiddos were doing activities and making T-shirts. We got to see some of the new campers make friends before they got on the bus, and we got very excited."

Seeing the impact on those campers, Ariel made it her goal to host similar Camp Day events prior to each bus departure this summer. Coordinating with the admissions team onsite in Connecticut, Ariel readied materials for each camper who was expected, and planned activities that would help foster connection while giving parents a little window into what their child would experience during their session.

"We wanted to provide not only a space for campers to feel a little more at ease, but also a place for their caregivers to make a connection and feel that everything is going to be OK," Ariel



Campers at Boston Children's Hospital were treated to Camp Day send-offs before boarding the bus to Hole in the Wall.

shared. "The connections just grew, and we were able to build that Camp spirit before the kids got on the bus and headed on their way."

The reception has been positive, with campers making friends, parents finding peace and hospital staff feeling supported. It's a partnership that we look forward to continuing.

"The participation of the Boston-based Hospital Outreach program (HOP) team on Camp departure day has proven to be such an important part of the day," said Jackie Miranda, social worker at Boston Children's Hospital. "HOP provides a space for the campers to engage in and start that Camp experience. This is especially beneficial for our nervous newbies. Even our veteran campers are easily engaged with the HOP activities and connect with old friends prior to boarding the bus."

If you'd like to learn more about Camp's Hospital Outreach program, contact Hospital Outreach Program Director Michele "Gill" McKenna at michele.mckenna@holeinthewallgang.org.

CREATIVE CORNER

Whether with HOP, CampOut or onsite, one of the hallmarks of a Camp experience is the opportunity to let your creativity shine. Check out some of these amazing projects our campers have been inspired to create with Hole in the Wall.



SUMMER 2025

Summer fun extended from the summer program, to hospitals and beyond. This year, more than 900 participants enjoyed programming onsite, while thousands more found friendship and laughter through events like Camp Week @ Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Camp Days, and a plethora of regional CampOut and Family Outreach gatherings. Check out some of our favorite memories.





SIBLINGS NEED CAMP TOO



Ana Cruz Kayne (bottom right) volunteering as a cabin counselor with the blue unit.

My family's Camp journey started with my brother Danny's diagnosis: Osteosarcoma of the distal femur. As a 10-year-old, I would chew these words until it became rote — this diagnosis defined us.

Looking back, it's impossible to forget the sounds and smells of our house when my brother was sick. There was an ominous hush; a secrecy bred of protection. The adults around me were exhausted and scared and preoccupied, and whatever the reason, I wouldn't understand.

I knew that I was loved. My dad made sure I knew. But my parents' love didn't look like the love I saw in my friends' homes. My friends had bedtimes, and they ate together as a family. I was unsupervised and dangerously independent. I was funny and irreverent, and there were no consequences because no one was watching. The more I leaned into these behaviors, the more isolated I became.

This escalated until my dad told me I was going with him to pick-up Danny from a summer camp with a wacky and wild name. It seemed pretty cringe, but I obliged.

We pulled up to the gate and were greeted with a kind of energy I'd describe as contagious! It was impossible to avoid the kindness and playfulness we were hit with the second we drove in. We were given nametags, and I made a joke about my name being "Danny's sister." A staff member asked, "How do you spell that?"

I loved that response. I wasn't energetically made to feel like I did it wrong. They met me with a warmth and a humor that made me feel seen. This kind of connection meant everything to a kid who was deeply guarded and hurt. I began to soften.

When we got to the dining hall, my brother was unrecognizable. He had color in his cheeks and a certain swagger I hadn't seen in years. His spirit had returned, and it wasn't subtle.

That same summer, my Dad asked if I wanted to attend Camp as a sibling camper. I agreed even though I was scared to be away from my family. As adult as I felt, I was just a child. I forgot that about myself.

During sibling session, we played games and danced with abandon, and everything was scheduled. That felt good to me. The other girls in my cabin came from similar households, and it wasn't dramatic to say "when my brother got his central venous catheter..." But more than that, we didn't have to talk about it. We were just us. It felt safe and fun. And fun was not a common occurrence. Camp began to chip away at my many layers of self protection. And that's what kept me coming back for 15 summers as cabin volunteer.

I am so grateful that Doc Pearson and the Newmans had the foresight to acknowledge the needs of siblings. Sibling session saves lives. And that's no small fry.
~Former Camper Ana Cruz Kayne

SHERIFF'S SPOTLIGHT



After Stephen Brown's sister lost a baby, he wanted to find a way to honor his memory. And when an employee mentioned Hole in the Wall, and he researched the mission, he realized Camp was exactly what he was looking for and began supporting through his company, Energy Electrical Contractors (EEC).

"I believe that if you are part of your local community, you should donate more than dollars, you should donate your time as well," Stephen shared. "At Hole in the Wall, we could put some physical time into Camp. We could give a donation of dollars that we were comfortable with. As we continue to grow and succeed, I believe our team and especially our non-profit partners, such as Camp, should share in that success."

Each year, EEC donates \$10,000 to Hole in the Wall and has also supported the Beantown Bash. But it's the Helping Hands

Workdays, where employees can volunteer at Camp's Connecticut location, that help further EEC's culture and allow everyone to feel connected to Camp's mission

"We have a great culture here, and we work hard on it," Stephen said. "We always bring a split of employees from the office and field so they can spread the word. Anyone who has been to Camp gets it straight way and that helps spread the message"

We are so grateful to EEC and all of our corporate partners for their critical support, which provides "a different kind of healing" to Camp's children and families. If you'd like to learn more about our corporate partnership program, contact Andrea Keefe, director of foundation and corporate relations, at andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org.



BENEFIT EVENTS



A not so long time ago, at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford, Conn., 250 guests gathered for *Once Upon a Camp: A Celebration of Hole in the Wall Stories*, raising more than \$1.2 million for Camp's growing programs. Our stellar camper correspondents – Leyma and Violet – shared the event highlights via Hole in the Wall's social channels for those who weren't able to attend in person.



The day kicked off in downtown Camp under crystal blue skies with live music, food trucks, cocktails and fun photo opportunities. As guests

enjoyed the offerings, they were also able to peruse the silent auction packed with fun items like a Rockford Peaches Uniform autographed by Geena Davis, an opportunity to see *Damn Yankees* in Washington, D.C. along with a meet and greet with former camper and Camp Board Member Ana Villafañe, and an escape to Kenefick Ranch in Napa Valley Wine Country.

As the afternoon continued, guests moved into Sports & Rec for the Live Auction. Following an update from Hole in the Wall CEO Jimmy Canton, Camper Nate shared about the healing role Camp has played in his journey with Sickle Cell. Then, celebrity emcee and journalist Frank DiLella joined professional auctioneer Erin Ward of Star Benefit Auctions to lead a spirited auction. The bids were hot and fast for sought after items like a weekend buyout of Granville House featuring dinner with a private chef, a perfect game ticket stub autographed by baseball legend Sandy Koufax, and the chance to sleep at Camp in the Founder's Cabin. As the auction wrapped up, friends shared in a moment of pure philanthropy, pledging their support of various Camp programs with their gifts.

Next up, the Fandango performance in the theater opened with a presentation of the Most Wanted Award to Mike and Eileen Kolakowski for their friendship that extends back to the start of Camp. Then nine talented campers – Desiray, Fidel, Ismail, Matteo, Michaela, Quinn, Ren, Wyborn and Zuzanna - took to the stage alongside Sara Chase, Melinda Doolittle, Sidney DuPont, Kristen Hahn, Stacie Morgain Lewis, Ali Stroker, Vishal Vaidya and other

sensational Camp friends for a show packed with funny skits, powerful musical numbers and inspirational Camp stories. The McMorrans shared how Hole in the Wall has impacted every member of their family after their daughter, Zoe, was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2011, and later passed away, deeply moving the audience.

Following the show, the celebration continued into the night with dinner, music and treats under festive tents with twinkling lights. It was truly an event for the books.



Frank DiLella and Erin Ward



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The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Gazette is published by The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

MARYLAND UPDATE

Below: A colorful mural on the exterior of River House, designed by Ryan Writes on Things, will welcome camper families when they arrive for Family Camps.

Renovations on 50,000 square feet of existing space at our new facility in Queenstown, Maryland are nearly complete with family programming launching in May! The infirmary welcome area is bright and cheerful, as are the treatment rooms, which stand ready to provide state-of-the-art care. Accessibility features are being added across the facility to provide a consistent experience for everyone. Outside, an awning has been built on our patio so families can dine al fresco, with gorgeous views of the Wye River, while a colorful mural was recently added to the exterior of River House, sharing a cheerful welcome for all who visit.

Additionally, Maryland Camp Director Nicole Bontrager has been working closely with a team of program staff, including three Americorp volunteers and our new assistant Camp director, to plan out future programming including crab racing, with crabs from the Wye River, as well as pizza making, with herbs and veggies that families pick from our garden. And our new Maryland medical director, Dr. Nick Evageliou from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, will begin in his part-time role in the new year.

In 2026, there will be eight Family Camps. Five will focus on Sickle Cell disease, metabolic disorders and cancer, including one for children with Constitutional Mismatch Repair Deficiency, a condition where cancer continues to recur. There will

also be camps serving children with Neurofibromatosis, a rare disease where tumors grow throughout the nervous system; Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva or FOP, an ultra-rare genetic disorder where soft tissues turn into bone; and Progeria, a devastating diagnosis where children rapidly age.

And this is just the beginning. In the years ahead, we'll be building out an entirely new campus on the property where campers can enjoy programming independent of their families, taking the best of the best from the Connecticut location and mixing it with the magic of Maryland. We can't wait for all that the future holds as we bring these life-changing programs to entirely new groups of children and families.



to read about Camp's incredible community of support

LOOK INSIDE

a serious fun camp



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