I Am Because We Are
By Matthew Cook, Camp Director

Summer 2011 at Camp was characterized by the African concept of Ubuntu, defined by Nelson Mandela as: “I am because we are.” This theme celebrated our connectedness and shared commitment to living each moment dedicated to Camp’s core values of Safety, Respect and Love. At our opening campfire at Session Five, I asked, as I often do, who had been to Camp before and invited those campers to share why they were excited to be back. The inevitable answers came: “To swim in the pool.” “To catch a fish.” “To play my clarinet at Stage Night.” Then one girl said, “Because it feels good to be with people who understand what it’s like for me to be dealing with my illness.” With that, a bond began to form – because every child around the campfire had individually felt the isolation underlying her statement. I am not alone because we are not alone.

This summer, New Haven band Mean Carlene played their hearts out for us. Their music energized Camp. In the theater, 200 joyful campers and counselors danced and sang with abandon. I am joyful because we are joyful.

Checking on our oldest campers in Adventure one session, I spoke with a young man preparing to climb the Tower. He put on his helmet. Then he bent down and removed his prosthetic leg.

“Are you doing that to make the experience more challenging?” I asked.

“No,” he answered matter-of-factly. “I think it’s just going to get in the way.” With that, he hopped over to the Tower, climbed to the top and zipped to the cheers of his Unit. I am courageous because we are courageous.

All the highlights of a successful summer, however, pale in comparison to the stories of two of our 2011 campers – a little boy, age eight, and a young lady, age 15. Both battled cancer for years. Both experienced friendship, joy and freedom during their session. And both died within a week of returning home from Camp. In speaking with the boy’s father shortly after his son’s passing, I was reminded of how critically important Camp is for our campers and their families. Like all our camper parents, this boy’s parents trusted us to give their son an experience he could not have enjoyed elsewhere. They selflessly gave up a week of being with their son so he could live out that experience. They took it on faith that this Camp experience would be exactly what their boy needed…. It was.

I’ve heard it said that Camp is not a noun but a verb. Camp happens. Those of us who make Camp happen know it is much more than a good time or dream come true. It is critically important in the lives of the children we serve. I am grateful for each magic moment that we lived and created with all of our campers this summer.

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Be sure to “like” us on Facebook. 
www.facebook.com/holeinthewallgangcamp
What’s New at Camp

Celebrity sightings at Camp this summer included actress Bridget Moynahan of CBS’s prime time TV show *Blue Bloods*, and PGA Tour Golf Champion Bubba Watson. Bridget climbed the Tower with our Blue Unit campers, while Bubba joined us for lunch and a special Camp tour. Bubba is the 2010 winner of the Travelers Championship – an exceptional golfing event that takes place each year in Cromwell, Conn., and has raised more than $1,175,000 in support of Camp’s mission since 2007. Share the love – view our Best of Summer 2011 video and the other great videos in our library at www.holeinthewallgang.org/summer2011.

This holiday season, recognize clients, family and friends with Camp’s holiday tribute card. Featuring camper artwork, Camp’s holiday cards let you make a donation to Camp on behalf of others. An order form is located at www.holeinthewallgang.org/holidaycard. In addition, Camp offers holiday giving opportunities for corporations looking for a way to recognize valued clients through a significant gift to Camp. For more information, see www.holeinthewallgang.org/corpholidaygiving.

For the past several years, Camp has increased its commitment to serve more acutely ill children. Summer 2011 pushed our capabilities even further. We measure the increased acuity by numbers of children requiring significant nursing care, numbers of infirmary visits, numbers of non-ambulatory campers and numbers of campers sleeping, out of necessity, in the infirmary. Our infirmary staff is in a constant state of balancing increased care with the requisite living space for additional medical staff. As a result of this past summer, we will add housing for more nurses and doctors and plan on modifying our infirmary to accommodate more campers and those who care for them.

Our summer program, this year serving 1,070 children, will always remain at the center of our programming. What new friends are surprised to hear, however, is that we serve more campers and their families in fall and spring programs than we do in the summer, and our Hospital Outreach Program continues to increase service in new hospitals. Altogether, Camp will serve more than 2,500 seriously ill children and their families on-site, and more than 15,000 off-site in 20 hospital locations.

As we look forward to celebrating our 25th summer next year, we are grateful for the support that has brought us to this point in Camp’s history. We thank you for believing in the mission of Camp and helping us to bring joy, healing and friendship to thousands of seriously ill children craving acceptance, support and the opportunity to just be normal.

From the CEO

Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Chief Executive Officer Jimmy Canton with a 2011 camper
Thanks to our 2010 Team Members

We celebrate the hundreds of volunteers who helped us to make 2010 a successful year for Campers and our Camp.

Program Volunteers

Volunteer Physicians
Session One Wilber Pat, MD Kelly Metz
Session Two Dave Nelson, MD Ken Weiss, MD
Session Three Dr. David Paradiso Patricia Kwanagh
Session Four John McDonald, MD
Session Five Mike Slack, MD Bill Murgese, MD Kendall Weiss, DO
Session Six Greg Chmiel, MD
Session Seven John Green, MD Kevin Howland, MD
Session Eight Michael Burns, MD Sage Klarich
Session Nine John Ralston, MD Lee Schwartz, MD

Volunteer Nurses
Session One Mark Zitron
Session Two Bob Banas, MD
Session Three John Banas, MD
Session Four Paul Banas, MD
Session Five Dave Banas, MD
Session Six Paul Banas, MD
Session Seven John Banas, MD
Session Eight John Banas, MD

Volunteer Counselors
Andrew Creighton and camper

Volunteer counselors Andrew Creighton and camper.
Hospital Outreach Program Specialist Elke Perez is a former camper, and like most of our Specialists, found time in her busy schedule working with hospitalized children to volunteer for a session at Camp this past summer. She works with our New York City Hospital Outreach Program team and is a licensed social worker. Elke first came to Camp as a camper 20 years ago. “At first, I was really confused,” she recalled. “It took me awhile to take it all in – that there were other people with the same illness I had, that there really was a heated pool where I could swim and not get sick. I was waiting for someone to come and say I had been dreaming it all. It meant so much to me not to stand out, not to be different in a way that others couldn’t understand. At Camp, everyone ‘got it’ and no explanation was needed. I could just be a kid and play.” Later, as a counselor, what drew me back to Camp,” said Elke. “was getting to be one of the people who makes that great feeling happen for someone else.”

Elke served as a summer counselor at Camp for four years and has volunteered nearly every year since. Working as a Hospital Outreach Specialist, said Elke, now allows her to “spread the joy, fun and childlike spirit of Camp” all year long.

What’s New at the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Hospital Outreach Program
★ This summer, Camp’s Hospital Outreach Program offered a pilot, day-camp experience at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, gaining new knowledge and expertise in how to bring such a program to clinical sites in the future.
★ Hospital Outreach Program Director Mary Naumec is interviewing to fill Outreach Specialist openings in Boston, Connecticut and New York that will bring the total number of our Hospital Outreach Specialist staff to 18.
★ Today, more than half of our Hospital Outreach Specialists are former campers.

Aetna’s Helping Hands
Aetna volunteers played a critical role readying Camp for our eager campers before the 2011 summer sessions. In all, 230 employees from Aetna’s Hartford Volunteer Council helped out by making beds, washing buildings, preparing vehicles, cleaning the pool, delivering cabin supplies, organizing activity areas and landscaping gardens. “Aetna employees have provided more than 18,750 volunteer hours since this partnership began in 2000,” reported Denise Zachmann, Chairman of Aetna’s Hartford Volunteer Council. “We look forward to attending more Helping Hands Workdays in the months to come to help the Camp prepare for its year-round programs,” she said.

“‘Aetna volunteers are proud to support the work of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp,’ added Floyd Green, Head of Community Relations and Urban Marketing at Aetna, Inc. “Aetna employees take a very hands-on approach with assisting our community partners, and it is a unique privilege to impact the Camp in this special way.” To date, Aetna has contributed more than $550,000 to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp to help expand the Camp Challenge Ride to five associated camps across the United States. Additionally, more than 70 cyclists from Team Aetna Riders participated in the events, supported by dozens of Aetna volunteers. For more information on The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s Corporate Partners Program, please contact Ray Shedd, Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations, at ray.shedd@holeinthewallgang.org or visit our website at www.holeinthewallgang.org.

Camper Corral
Stories from our campers and former campers.

Kingdar Prussein
After spending Summer 2011 at Camp as Unit Leader in the Blue Unit, Kingdar boarded a plane for California to begin his first year at Stanford Law School. While at Camp this summer, King shared how moved he was by the insights of some of his campers. He explained how one boy described his illness, sickle cell anemia. “It was how he said it, “ recalls King. “His combination of innocence and introspection – that really stood out to me.”

King’s camper told his cabin mates, “I get sick because some of my cells are shaped funny and they don’t fit in my blood, so that’s why I go get treatment…” Then he paused, and added, “...and that’s why I’m here. So I guess it’s OK.” A former camper himself, King added: “When you are sick with a serious illness, you are in and out of the hospital. Even coming home to your own bed feels temporary. Camp sometimes feels more like home than home does. It’s where you can feel comfortable. Where things stay the same. Coming to Camp feels like coming home for me and, I can only believe, for many of the campers and counselors who come here, too.”

Along with one-third of our summer counselors, Blue Unit Leader Kingdar Prussein is a former camper, making Camp magic happen for a new generation of seriously ill children. We congratulate Kingdar on his accomplishments and wish him the best as he begins his first year at Stanford Law School.
Our Events
Highlights of our latest benefi ts events and those to come…

This year’s Gala was held September 17 at the Camp in Ashford, Conn., and featured a true “love-in” – from classic 60s songs and costumes on-stage to the outstanding generosity of our Camp friends, who raised an unprecedented $1,552,405 for our camps. The afternoon featured a cocktail party with live music by Mean Carlene and a live auction presided over with skill and humor by longtime Camp friend Alec Baldwin. Camp’s Most Wanted Award recipients, Jane and Bob Coppa, were recognized for their extraordinary philanthropic leadership and Camp love. The evening featured an incomparable Fandango performance by celebrity friends and campers, and a buffet dinner with live music by swing band Hot Cat Jazz.

Comedian, actress and talk show host Woorip Goldberg led a star-studded Fandango cast, including Cheyenne Jackson, Bridgitte Mynahan, Melissa Newman, Tim Robbins and Lillias White, as well as our talented Hole in the Wall campers: Yareli Ametevee, Devir Carrera, Vanessa Gunha, Andrew DiGiovanni, Rachael Duncan, Jocelyn Gentile, Cameron Greenwood, Eric Johnson, Roxie Kubis, Halle Middleton, Candice Reed and Zak Stenigel.

Special thanks go to Board Member James Naughton, who has directed the performance since 1998, and Kevin Duncan, who has produced the Fandango since 1994. They were joined by Production Supervisor Janet Beroza, Production Stage Manager Annie Keeke and Stage Manager Robin Kevick Baker, Musical Directors Mary-Mitchell Campbell, Laura Bergquist and Chris Haber, MMC, and by these talented stage professionals: Zoe Hanson, Polly Wood-Holland, Joe Ann M. Hunter, Carol Ingram and our Fandango Orchestra.

As this issue of our Gazette went to press, Camp’s Annual Halloween Bash in New York City was scheduled to take place October 22. Each year, this family friendly event features a private performance of the Big Apple Circus at Lincoln Center for donors, campers and their families. Campers and their families attend free of charge. A post-Circus party at the Hard Rock Cafe UVe Venue in Times Square was planned, complete with children’s activities, dinner buffet and live performances by Tony Award Winners John Lloyd Young and Lillias White.

Be sure to save the date for our Founder’s Day celebration at Westport Country Playhouse on January 26, 2012. Details coming soon.

Team Hole in the Wall 2012 Event Calendar
New York City Half Marathon March 18
MORE/Fitness Women’s Half Marathon April 15
Boston Marathon April 16
Five Boro Bike Tour May 6
AngellRide May 26-27
Fairfield Road Race (5K & Half Marathon) June 23-24
Ironman US Championship August 11
New York City Triathlon August 24
Camp Challenge Ride September 8
ING New York City Marathon November 3
Team Challenge Ongoing

“There’s no shortage of deserving causes, but I just can’t find a better one than The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.”
Cyclist Charles Collison, age 81

Team Update
Catch up on Team News
Team Hole in the Wall launched its new blog (http://blog.teamholeinthewall.org) this past September as a resource for a growing online community. Here, users can find team news and announcements, information on upcoming events, training tips, fundraising ideas, and Camp videos, stories and updates. Visitors can subscribe via email or RSS feed and engage in the community by leaving comments on posts and asking questions of fellow members or Team Hole in the Wall staff.

Initial posts featured Team Challenge Member Mari Arnaud, who hiked the Long Trail and used her hiking adventure to raise funds for Camp. The oldest-long distance trail in the United States, the Long Trail runs 272 miles from southern Vermont to the Canadian border. The 24-day journey challenged Mari both physically and mentally, and her efforts resulted in nearly $14,000 in donations to support The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

Team Challenge is an exciting Team Hole in the Wall registration option that provides individuals like Mari with the opportunity to create their own events – anything from lemonade stands and penny drives to golf tournaments and hikes. Mari explained her motivation for raising funds through the Team Challenge this way, “The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp is one of my favorite places on the planet…” she wrote, “Just as I return from my hikes with renewed inner reserves to meet life’s challenges, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp fortifies its kids with happy memories, and the strength and courage they need to face their difficulties.” You can read more from Mari on the Team Hole in the Wall Blog at http://blog.teamholeinthewall.org/longtrail. Or, see her Twitter updates and photos sent from the Long Trail at www.twitter.com/MarisHITWhike. Team Hole in the Wall can be found at the following sites:

flickr YouTube

Registration is now open for many team events. Please visit www.teamholeinthewall.org for more information.

Team Hole in the Wall
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Our Boston Community

For 17 years, Boston area support for Camp has been driven by the Crowley family and Ken’s Food, Inc. through the successful Boston Big Top Bash. This year, that same generous spirit spread to more Boston area community leaders who volunteered their time, good will and passion for Camp to produce an array of exciting fundraising events.

Camp is grateful for funding provided by Boston community events organized by dedicated individuals like camper parent and Caron-Wood Charity Golf Classic Tournament Director Marcy LeBlanc.

“As parents, we cannot begin to describe what Camp has done for us,” said Marcy. “We felt like we had finally found a home. As they say at Camp, ‘You may leave Camp, but it never leaves you.’” Together with her husband Dave, Marcy LeBlanc connected with Cape Cod professional golfers and tournament founders Jason Caron and Carri Wood to present the tournament’s inaugural year for Camp. The event raised $32,000 for Camp and featured Boston sports celebrities.

The Varsity Fund is a Boston-based group of young professionals working to raise funds for our Boston Hospital Outreach Program. Their First Annual Winter H.O.P. at the Grand Circle Gallery in February was filled with tremendous energy and enthusiasm for Camp. Also on The Varsity Fund agenda was their Halloween H.O.P. party at Boston’s Mandarin Oriental Hotel on October 28. “Seeing just one child smile, seeing them forget about their illness…that is what motivates our tireless group, The Varsity Fund,” said Brandon Smith.

“Camp is a special place that recognizes that the patient is not the only member of the family affected by a disease.” Additional Boston fundraising events this year included The Big Game Battle – a fishing tournament held on Nantucket Island; Camp Cuts – a hair-cutting extravaganza hosted by photographer and South End personality Izy Blanden; The Prasco Charity Stripe Challenge – a basketball-shot fundraiser at TD Garden.

To learn more about our community events or how to organize your own event, please contact Michael Hund at michael.hund@holeinthewallgang.org or (203) 772-0522.

Our gratitude goes out to all who host and organize fundraising events in support of Camp’s mission.

Pardner Profile

Kevin Magee

This year, Kevin Magee celebrated 20 years of successfully stewarding the finances of Camp in his management role as The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s Chief Financial Officer. He is also a dedicated volunteer counselor in Camp’s signature summer program.

A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Kevin holds a B.S. in accounting and is a member of the AICPA and the CSCPA. “How fortunate we are at Camp to have someone like Kevin,” said Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Chief Executive Officer Jimmy Canton. “Kevin’s selfless example as a consistent volunteer in the summer and off-season programs inspires all of his colleagues. And his unwavering attention to financial matters ensures that Camp stewards the gifts it has been given to maximize its full healing potential.”

Founded in 1988 by Paul Newman, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp is a non-profit, year-round center serving children and their families coping with cancer, sickle cell anemia, and other serious illnesses. Through summer sessions and family weekend programs at the Camp in Ashford, Conn., and you can reach us toll-free to schedule a visit to hospital and clinical sites throughout the Northeast, the Camp will serve more than 17,500 children in 2011. All services are free of charge.

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Comedian, actress and talk show host Whoopi Goldberg performed with our talented campers at the Gala Fandango performance held at Camp in September. See inside this issue for more about our Gala and the many celebrities who helped make it an outstanding experience for our donors and Camp friends.

Inside... Fall. Take a look summer and faces during the a host of famous Camp welcomed