Camp Memories Lost and Found Again

Tamara was one of the first campers to attend Hole in the Wall back in 1988. She had the opportunity to relive that time – and regain lost memories – at this summer’s Birthday Bash.

How did you learn about Camp and come to be a camper that first summer?

I was a patient at the Children’s Memorial Hospital of Chicago. Every year, the hospital would rent a college campus in Lake Geneva and host a camp called One Step, where I was a camper. But in 1988, they must have gotten an invitation from Paul Newman, because we all went to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp instead. And for the next three summers, I pleaded with my parents to return on my own so I could see all my friends again.

What was the experience like for you?

It was amazing. Groups came from all over the world, including one from England where my very best Camp friend Alice came from. There was a group from France, who didn’t speak any English, but that didn’t matter – you don’t need to speak English to boat and fish and sing campfire songs. It made me realize that despite a few differences among us, we were more alike than different – we all wanted to survive and enjoy our childhood while we fought our illnesses.

Those summers also helped me to come out of my shell. At the time, I very much wanted to be an actress and a teacher, but I was rather shy. I enjoyed the silliness and freedom to not have to look perfect or be dressed perfect – to laugh and be laughed at. And when you got up on stage for Stage Night, the applause was amazing. No matter what you did up there, everyone was cheering. It felt great.

What have you been doing since Camp?

I knew when I was younger that I wanted to give back, and I became a special education teacher. Then a year ago, I was hit by a car while on a training ride for my 11th event with Team in Training for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. As a result of that accident, I had an MRI, which revealed a meningioma in my brain. Typically, when people have these, they are pretty harmless, but because of the cranial radiation and chemotherapy I had as a child to treat my acute lymphocytic leukemia, it was of concern. The radiation undoubtedly saved my life but had this negative side effect.

I had surgery to remove the meningioma in November 2012, but when I woke up, I initially couldn’t remember anything after I was eight years old. As time passed, I remembered a lot of things through high school, which included all of my time as a camper. While I was recovering, my daughter brought an iPad to me at the hospital, where I looked up Camp and found out about the New York event at Grey Advertising, and I attended. When I was there and watched the promo video, I cried in such a good, powerful way that I knew that whatever I did for my recovery, Camp had to be part of it.

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From the CEO

Twenty-five years ago, on the night before the first camper arrived, our Founder Paul Newman toasted the staff. “I’ve taken it this far,” he said. “You take it from here. Raise a little hell.”

It didn’t take long for Paul and the rest of us to realize that along with all the fun, something incredibly profound was happening inside this Hole in the Wall. For our campers, being part of this special community restored their hope and lifted their spirits more than anyone could ever have imagined.

From day one, Paul knew that this dream was far bigger than just him. He knew that Camp needed other hands and other hearts to make “a different kind of healing” happen. As we conclude our 25th anniversary, I want to thank all of you for making Paul’s dream your own and helping us to reach such an incredible milestone.

But our anniversary is not just a momentary celebration. It’s also a time for big dreams. There are still so many children and families out there who need Camp, which is why we were all so excited to launch a five-year plan that will broaden the reach of our programming and serve our existing families in even deeper ways. In this issue, you’ll see this plan in action when you read about the recent expansion of our Hospital Outreach Program, the launch of our CampOut program and a new staff member who is helping us use research and evaluation to ensure we provide the best programming possible.

Camp has been given so much over the years – an inspirational founder, generous friends, devoted staff and volunteers, and, most important of all, the faith that our families place in us. It is because of this extraordinary community and all of you that we have so much to celebrate and a future filled with so much promise.

Thank you all, and thank you Paul, for 25 wonderful years. The best is yet to come.

Camp’s Time Capsule

It’s the stuff of Camp legend – how Camp was built in just nine months during a brutal New England winter, through the sheer force of Paul Newman’s determination. Well, that and the hard work of a lot of people!

Thirty-five buildings were constructed during that time, amid snow, ice, rain and mud. Every step of the way, Paul was there, showing his support and appreciation for everyone’s hard work – not to mention the beer and pizza he was known for providing. He’s even rumored to have autographed the bald head of one lucky individual …

What’s New at Camp

The excitement sizzled again this summer here at Camp. It all began on May 18th when Hole in the Wall welcomed back 1,800 alumni campers, staff, volunteers and their families for a glorious day of reconnection, reminiscing and friendship at the 25th Birthday Bash. On June 1st, Camp celebrated the grand opening of Steve’s Station, a brand-new, 5,000-square-foot residence for medical staff. Featuring five apartments with a total of 12 additional bedrooms, it provides much needed space for the medical staff and volunteers who serve the increasing number of children who come to Camp with acute illnesses. Built in the fashion Camp has become known for (in other words: fast!), Steve’s Station is located off Cabin Circle, right next to Lulu’s Lodge. Of course, this amazing new building wouldn’t have been possible without a very generous gift from Camp friend Steve Ruchefsky. Sizzling could also be found this summer at Camp’s new Cooking Zone, where campers received healthy eating tips while cooking up some yummy treats. Bread, homemade pasta and spring rolls were just a few of the delicious dishes created in the beautiful (and air-conditioned) kitchen located next to the Camp store in the former Creative Zone program area. Other popular items coming out of the ovens: cookies, cakes and pies!

The excitement continued as we moved into the fall. In September, Connecticut Public Television (CPTV) began airing The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp: A Different Kind of Healing. The documentary tells the story of Camp through the eyes of four campers and their families. They share their experiences coping with their illnesses and describe how Camp has supported them over the years.

We also launched CampOut, a traveling program that brings the hopeful, playful spirit of Camp to our current and recent campers and their families right in their hometowns. The program helps to continue the magic and connections of Camp throughout the year as a mobile team of specialists drive a tricked-out van filled with Camp-style activities, crafts and games to various locations, including camper homes, schools and other community venues. The program launched in September and will continue to make stops across the Northeast, so keep your eyes open for when it comes to a community near you.

And as we move into winter, we’re also thrilled to tell you about the generosity of long-time Camp partner C&S Wholesale Grocers. Employees from the company’s information and technology team helped to design Camp’s new public-address system, which will be installed over the winter. Can you hear us now?

CampOut specialists James Sibelle and Hope Winkler.
Thursday evenings for some is a time to relax and watch the football game on TV, but not for our Central New England Hospital Outreach team. For them, Thursday nights are a time to connect with patients and families at Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CT Children's).

A new program, Thursday Nights at CT Children's, is offered every Thursday from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and is staffed in rotation by Hospital Outreach Specialists Bryan Ballard, Gayle Smotherman, Jamie Fuller and Mike Dauphin. It provides a time for entire families, who are typically visiting during those hours anyway, to get together after a day of medical procedures and just enjoy time together. It's a time for art like painting, drawing or stop-motion animation, crafts like duct tape projects or a large game that brings everyone together, like Wheel of Fortune. It's a time to engage in something non-threatening and completely unconnected to medical care.

"For me, being at one of our weekly evening groups often feels like being at a family weekend at Camp," said Mike Dauphin, the Hospital Outreach Program (HOP) regional manager for Central New England. "We play music or get Karaoke going, parents and siblings are there, and of course there's the rotating group of Camp faces. It's incredible, and it wouldn't be possible without the support and fresh energy of our new HOP volunteers."

HOP at CT Children's is able to welcome volunteers on Thursday nights to help support the large group of patients and families who join in the activities. Several long-time Camp volunteers have gone through CT Children's training to assist with facilitating programs, with one or two participating in each week's session. "Last night reinforced for me how very important what HOP does is for families. The group was small, but the evening was so powerful," said volunteer and year-round Camp staff member Deb Fraser following one of her evenings with HOP at CT Children's. "The parents of one little boy in particular couldn't stop thanking us for being there. They said that he was crying all day long, and they felt helpless to comfort him. They were so very excited to be able to leave their room, work on a project as a family and forget their troubles for a while. And most importantly, they finally got to see him smile!"

For information about volunteering for Thursday Nights at CT Children's, please contact Gayle Smotherman at gsmotherman@ctchildrens.org.

HOP Regional Manager Mike Dauphin and volunteer Deb Fraser with superhero patients.

What's New at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Hospital Outreach Program

★ The Hospital Outreach Team expanded into Philadelphia with a brand-new office in Old City and recent hires Michele Gill McKenna, Kyle Smith and Francine Martin – all former Hole in the Wall campers. Programming will begin at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Main Campus, CHOP-King of Prussia clinic, CHOP-Voorhees clinic and St. Christopher's in November.
★ The New York Team started programming at Maimonides Infant's and Children's Hospital (Brooklyn, NY) in August.
★ The Central New England Team anticipates starting programming at Blythedale Children's Hospital & Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Westchester County, NY, later this fall.
★ The Boston Team began a pilot program with Pedi Pals-Notre Dame Hospice to provide Hospital Outreach to Worcester, Mass., area children in palliative care.
★ The Boston Team also presented four successful outdoor "Camp Days" in Prouty Garden at Boston Children's Hospital.
★ As part of Camp's overall commitment to research and evaluation, HOP is developing program evaluation in collaboration with Yale Child Studies Center and SeriousFun Children's Network to measure the impact of HOP at two pilot sites: Yale and CT Children's.
★ HOP hosted the annual New England Child Life Professionals Conference October 6-7, and the annual Hospital Outreach Conference, for Camp Ooch and the SeriousFun Children's Network, on October 8-9. Both events took place at Camp.

Camper Corral

Stories from current and former campers.

In the spring of 2009, while most kindergartners are learning how to read, Halle learned she had medulloblastoma, a rare brain cancer. She spent her first week at Camp in the summer of 2010 and has been back every year since. Now a fifth grader, she is in remission, but her family credits Camp as one of the most positive experiences Halle had during her cancer journey.

"I am so thankful for Camp because it has been such a lift for her – such a great place for her to look forward to in some bad situations," said Halle's mom, Amy. "When you have a child who goes through those gates – it's more than 300 acres of love and joy – it's magical and transformational."

For Halle, Camp is a chance to show off her creative side. Arts and crafts, stage night, and singing and dancing in the dining hall are among the activities she enjoys most. Her love of performing even scored her a spot in the 2011 Gala, an experience she remembers with fondness.

"Halle has such incredible memories of being part of the Gala and the whole experience that came with it," said Amy. But it is the people at Camp who have made the biggest impression on Halle and her family. Whether fellow campers who became close friends by the end of the session or counselors who are there every summer to offer their support, the affection Halle has for all of her Camp friends has clearly impacted her. Even her favorite Camp activity – Cabin Chat – is reflective of the bonding that takes place.

As for the future, Halle hopes to continue to be involved with Camp for years to come and someday follow in the footsteps of those who have so inspired her during her summers as a camper. "I want to be a teacher because when you're a teacher, you have nothing to do in the summer," she said. "So I can be a counselor."
The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's infirmary, the O.K. Corral, is a very busy place. The doors swing open to welcome more than 5,000 unique visits by campers every year, for everything from scraped knees to infusion treatments.

But lately, the O.K. Corral has seen a significant increase in the number of children in need of daily nursing care passing through its doors. This spike in high acuity medicine, particularly for children with metabolic disorders and other rare illnesses, means that more and more campers require overnight observation and recurring medical treatments like G-tube feedings and ventilator-assisted breathing.

In fact, during each session, between two and five children require scheduled overnight care in the infirmary, on top of the many unscheduled and unforeseen overnight stays.

A renovation of the infirmary was critical to providing more comprehensive care for these campers. Thankfully, our friends at RBS were looking for a way to mark Camp's 25th anniversary, and they were only too happy to help fund the infirmary renovations.

Begun in the spring of 2012, the infirmary overhaul tripled the size of the pharmacy, added several treatment rooms and built a brand-new residential wing able to accommodate eight campers needing overnight care.

"RBS is proud to be a longtime partner of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp and shares in its commitment to creating an inspiring environment for children coping with serious illnesses," said Carol Mathis, chief operating officer, Markets and International Banking, Americas, at RBS. "The expansion of the infirmary is an opportunity for our franchise to support a critical medical program at Camp. On behalf of our dedicated employees, volunteers and the RBS management team, we congratulate everyone at Hole in the Wall on reaching the impressive milestone of 25 years of service and are excited to celebrate the team's many achievements through this important renovation."

For more information on The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's Corporate Partners Program, please contact Ray Shedd at ray.shedd@holeinthewallgang.org or visit our website at http://www.holeinthewallgang.org.

Bandits in the Big Apple 25th Anniversary

On September 30th, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp moved its annual Gala celebration from Ashford, Conn., to Manhattan’s Upper West Side for the Bandits in the Big Apple 25th Anniversary Celebration. The event, which raised $2 million to support Camp’s year-round services, was co-chaired by The Alec Baldwin Foundation, American Packaging Corporation, LiDestri Food & Beverage, Newman’s Own Foundation, Rick & Sandy Sorenson and The Travelers Companies, Inc. The evening featured retrospectives and performances by The Hole in the Wall Gang Campers and the cast of Broadway’s “Pippin,” as well as celebrity friends Bruce Willis, Renée Zellweger, Joy Behar, David Crosby, Kelli O’Hara, John Pizzarelli and Lillias White. Musical performances were joined with inspirational stories from camper families and reminiscences from longtime Camp friends. More than 1,000 guests enjoyed a Western-themed pre-performance cocktail reception and a post-performance dinner buffet with live music by the Roots/Americana band Poor Old Shine.

New accommodations at the O.K. Corral allow more campers in need of overnight care the opportunity to attend Camp.
Celebration
Our Events

As we conclude our yearlong 25th anniversary celebration, we are left with unbelievable memories from our Camp events—one for each season. Whether taking in the circus, soaking up the sun on the polo grounds or hitting the green, there was something for everyone.

In the spring, our 19th annual Boston Big Top Bash brought big fun, clown noses, face painting and cotton candy to Beantown once again. This festive April event gathered more than 1,200 campers, volunteers and donors to City Hall Plaza to enjoy a private performance of the Big Apple Circus. Guest Ringmaster Jerod Mayo from the New England Patriots joined Camp Director Matty Cook to welcome the crowd and thank participants for helping to raise more than $1 million for Camp! Following the circus hijinks, donors continued the celebration at a dinner reception at The Boston Children’s Museum, where Green Monster Red Sox tickets, autographed Tom Brady and Milan Lucic jerseys, and a trip to Bermuda were among the silent auction items.

Summer brought the Polo for Children event at the Greenwich Polo Club. Donors and their children were treated to Camp-style fun on a beautiful June day, though wet weather in the days leading up to the event meant no polo match. With an auction headlined by Board member Jim Naughton, cocktails and a family-style, summer-themed lunch, the polo wasn’t missed. Guest speaker Camper Cameron Merritt shared his love for Camp, while CEO Jimmy Canton regaled the audience with stories from his most recent week as a volunteer cabin counselor. Auction items included an African safari, a three-hour sail on an America’s Cup Yacht and a trip to the Emmys, including a walk down the red carpet. More than 100 children in attendance enjoyed a photo booth outfitted with fun props, arts and crafts, face painting, Ping-Pong and a picnic in the kids’ tent.

With the cooler weather of fall, we hit the green at the “Fore a Very Good Cause” Golf Tournament. More than 100 Camp friends descended on the Country Club of Fairfield for a gourmet brunch followed by 18 holes overlooking the Long Island Sound. After play, all were invited to a reception featuring a buffet dinner, prize drawings, and an auction including golf outings at Winged Foot, The Bridge Golf Course and Sebonack Golf Club. Camper siblings Trent and Rylie Dunn shared their Camp story.

Still to come this year is the Big Apple Bash in New York City on November 9. The Big Apple Bash brings together donors and camper families for a private performance of the Big Apple Circus at Lincoln Center featuring complimentary face painting for all! Following the performance, sponsors are invited to enjoy a private, fall-themed reception at the Hard Rock Café in Times Square featuring cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, dinner, activities for kids and live musical performances.

Team Update

What’s new and exciting at Team Hole in the Wall…

It’s been a year of anniversaries—not just for Camp but for Team as well. Two signature events—AngelRide and the Camp Challenge Ride—celebrated milestone years, 10 and five respectively. And for one Camp family, these events truly became “a family affair.”

Eleven-year-old Jack Krupienski was diagnosed with brain cancer two years ago and has been at Camp the last two summers. “Camp was just a whole other world away from my troubles,” he said.

Wanting to give back to Camp, the family participated in AngelRide this year as AngelMates—a new program launched in conjunction with the 10th anniversary celebration. AngelMates paired cycling teams with Hole in the Wall campers like Jack. Exemplifying their commitment to helping other kids experience the joy and magic that Camp has given Jack, his father and his teacher all rode in AngelRide for the first time, as did Jack himself.

Though the first day of the ride was rained out (for the first time in the history of the event), the day wasn’t a wash out, with riders treated to time at Camp, where they could really experience the magic of Hole in the Wall. Day two was cool and crisp, and the ride resumed, ultimately raising more than $700,000 for Camp.

Even more of the Krupienskis got in on the act for Camp Challenge. Jack, his father and his teacher all rode for Camp, while his mother walked in the first-ever Bandit 5K. Jack’s younger brothers even participated in the kid’s ride at Cabin Circle.

On what some called the most beautiful day of the year, Camp Challenge was an unprecedented success, with more than 800 riders, runners, walkers and volunteers at Camp. So far, the event has raised more than $300,000, with additional donations still coming in.

If you are interested in taking on AngelRide, Camp Challenge Ride or another athletic challenge, visit http://www.teamholeinthewall.org. Team Hole in the Wall offers guaranteed entry into 10 annual athletic events and encourages athletes participating in any other event to make it a Team Hole in the Wall challenge through our “Choose Your Event” option. With Team Hole in the Wall, the opportunities to get involved in supporting Camp are endless.

2014 TEAM ATHLETIC EVENTS

- New York City Half Marathon • March 16
- Boston Marathon • April 21
- Five Boro Bike Tour • May 4
- AngelRide • May 24 - 25
- Fairfield Road Race • June 21 - 22
- New York City Triathlon • August 3
- Camp Challenge Ride • September 6
- Hartford Marathon • October 11
- TCS New York City Marathon • November 2

Left: This year’s Boston Big Top Bash was fun for the whole family.
Above: Everyone, from young to old, got in on the action at the Polo for Children event.
Pardner Profile

How do you calculate the healing power of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp? How do you measure the magic? These are just some of the questions new staff member Ann Gillard is wrestling with in her role as chief data wrangler (aka director of research and evaluation). She is charged with collecting information and using research to help The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp better understand the impact of our programs; how we, in fact, provide a “different kind of healing.” In order to uncover the secret to the success of Camp, she is looking specifically at things like camper and parent satisfaction, as well as overall programmatic outcomes.

“Programs such as Camp have the capacity to enhance the lives of kids dealing with serious and life-threatening illnesses,” said Ann. “Understanding how programs such as Camp support well-being, what the impact of Camp is on campers and families, the difference Camp makes in their lives, how Camp works to achieve these outcomes and impacts – these are all important questions to answer.”

Ann brings to her new role a passion for the power of camps that began when she attended them as a child. She has since worked as a camp director with the Girl Scouts, obtained a PhD in youth development and currently serves on the American Camp Association’s Committee for the Advancement of Research and Evaluation. She has spent the last eight years conducing research on camps for kids with chronic illnesses, both as a consultant and as a doctoral student. Like the overall Camp experience, Ann plans to integrate her research methods seamlessly into Camp programs without being burdensome or obtrusive to those participating. She is working to develop fun and creative ways to collect evidence of the healing power of Camp while identifying new areas where experiences can be enhanced for our Camp family.

“We know we are making a difference in the lives of our campers and their families,” said Becca Allen, chief program officer. “We now want to learn how we can deepen the magic, replicate it into new programs, measure it and prove it.”

Ann welcomes voices from across our community. If you have ideas or information related to her research, don’t hesitate to email her at ann.gillard@holeinthewallgang.org.

Saddle Up for Camp

Camp is at the epicenter of a caring community. Our gratitude goes out to all who host and organize fundraising events in support of Camp’s mission.

The Bayly Project

The Bayly brothers believe in the power of giving seriously ill children an experience that inspires optimism. It is a belief born from personal knowledge.

In 1987, at age seven, Mac Bayly was diagnosed with lymphoblastic lymphoma. Soon after, he attended a specialty camp for children with cancer, where he felt the comfort of being with others who had the same challenges he had.

As an adult, he became a volunteer counselor at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, but he always had a desire to do more. When his brother Chris shared a similar wish, The Bayly Project was born.

“We really look to the overarching theme from Paul Newman – to create something more – and try to emulate that in everything we do,” said Mac. “We don’t want to do customary fundraising events. Instead, we want to bring the Camp experience to our donors’ doors.”

Focusing primarily on young professionals, The Bayly Project works to connect attendees to the group’s purpose and Camp’s mission by offering fun, unexpected events. They began with a ping-pong-themed kick-off at SPIN in New York City and later hosted a night out at the Modell’s Club at a Met’s game. On July 27, The Bayly Project held its first Campground Gala, where guests enjoyed a scavenger hunt through the grounds of Waveny House in New Canaan, Conn., followed by an auction, local food and live music.

Additional opportunities to get in on The Bayly Project fun can be found at http://www.thebaylyproject.com. You can also check out Camp’s online event calendar, which lists all upcoming Camp, Team and community events, at http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/eventcalendar.

To organize your own event, please contact Andrea Keefe at andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org or (203) 772-6522.

Tamara - cont. from page 1

What was it like to come back for the 25th Birthday Bash? My sister had flown from Missouri to New Jersey, where I lived, to take me to Camp. When we pulled up and drove under the archway, my heart was racing, and I knew things would be OK whether I got my memory back or not. I couldn’t remember everyone, but people recognized me. I saw Jimmy, who was a counselor that first year, and he remembered me. It was as though time had not passed since those summers, and for me, that was more healing than any medicine. Then, while we were waiting to have our family portrait taken outside of my first cabin – Blue 2 – I saw my Camp friend Christina (Chris). I dropped the photo album I was holding, and it was like slow motion as we ran over to each other and had one of those “don’t let go” hugs. Tears were shed, and we shared memories from Camp and wondered what our other friends might be up to – and what happened to the White Unit, since it’s now Purple. Standing there in Cabin Circle, as the sky parted to let the sun shine down on all of us, I just remembered all those moments from Camp – dancing in the gym, drinking lemonade, singing songs at dusk, staying up to watch shooting stars, woodshop projects, tie dye, and all the other things we got to do.

It was great to have those memories back, and to be able to share these experiences with my daughter and sister who never knew what it was like for me. I can’t wait to come back to Camp again next summer.
Broadway star and Tony Award winner Lillias White was one of many celebrity friends who performed with our campers at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s Bandits in the Big Apple 25th Anniversary Celebration in New York City on September 30th.

Look inside to see Camp’s colorful conclusion to the yearlong 25th Anniversary Celebration.