The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp

Spring 2016

Restoring, Recharging and Revitalizing Families


The value of these things – things that parents experience at Camp’s Change of Pace Experience weekends or COPE – cannot be measured because they are invaluable.

But when a parent admits that this is the first time she’s danced with her husband in 10 years, or that she can’t even remember the last time she smiled until her face hurt, you begin to understand why COPE is so important.

And when a dad learns about programs available to his child – programs that could have an enormous positive impact on his child – from another dad who has been in the very same place, that understanding is even greater.

And when you witness a room of strangers become a family, laughing, sharing experiences and providing support, you can’t help but think – that’s Camp magic.

Five times each year, Hole in the Wall invites parents and caregivers of new campers to share this experience. The group, which includes both couples and single parents (who often bring a friend or family member for support), gathers together at the Heritage Inn in Southbury, Conn., for a weekend that, for once, is all about them. They are joined by “host parents,” camper parents who have been to COPE before and can share their stories and help guide the experience.

COPE begins with cocktails and dinner on Friday evening. Parents often gather around tables unsure what to expect. Conversations start out focused on everyday topics – where everyone is from, future vacation hopes, and expectations for the weekend. By the end of the evening, though, connections are already starting to form as parents find shared interests and an accepting community.

“We arrived at COPE, checked into the room and immediately started to relax,” said camper mom Tyyne Kelly. “No medication to give, no fever to monitor, no middle of the night check in, no dietary concerns, no meal prep, just a pass to have fun and let it all go… We hung out with other parents that just GOT it. No sorry looks on their faces when we described our situation, just understanding.”

On Saturday, the magic continues, with powerful speakers and a variety of fun Camp activities like woodshop and arts & crafts, and more adult activities like yoga, massages and Reiki. But the heart of the day belongs to the parent sessions. Moms gather with other moms in one room, while dads group together down the hall.

These sessions are designed to provide an experience similar to Cabin Chat, where our summer campers gather each evening and share their thoughts and experiences, or just be silly. Parents find a safe platform where they can share whatever they need with those who have walked in their shoes. Challenges, successes, happy moments or sad – nothing is off the table, and parents and caregivers often find that there is a lot to be learned from each other. It is here that friendships are solidified, and caregivers begin to truly understand that they are not alone.

That evening, filled with the connections of the day, everyone has the opportunity to let loose for a night of dinner and dancing.

“By the end of the second night, Brian and I were ready to paint the...”

continued on page 6

The Kelly Family has found Camp connections in all Camp programming, having participated in the summer program, Family Weekends and CampOut. But for mom, Tyyne, and dad, Brian, a COPE weekend was just what was needed to create some Camp magic of their own.

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What's New at Camp

Things at Camp are just the way we like them—busy! From new offerings to fun events and beyond, there is so much to be excited about.

Looking back at 2015, we were honored to welcome the Life is Good Tour to Camp at one of our Fall Family Weekends. Life is Good is a New England apparel company best known for its optimistic T-shirts. The company also supports kids in need as part of its mission. The visit included games, giveaways and our favorite— a gratitude jar, where everyone could write what they were grateful for on plastic balls to fill the jar with positivity. The Life is Good Tour’s stop also recognized Camp friend Mackenzie Page, founder of The Great Pumpkin Challenge fundraiser for Camp, naming her a Hero of Optimism.

The fall also brought exciting new CampOut events, including our first-ever Fall Ball and Iron Chef: Camp Edition. Fall Ball, hosted by Camp friend Aetna, was an opportunity for campers and their families to swing it up for an evening of fun, games and dancing. At Iron Chef: Camp Edition, hosted by Camp friend Clarke Corporation, campers got to try their hand at creating delicious treats while their parents had some treats of their own, in the form of a cooking demonstration!

At the end of the year, we were thrilled to welcome Terry Coughlin to our Board of Directors. After Terry’s daughter Grace was diagnosed with leukemia in June of 2013, the family attended a Family Weekend at Hole in the Wall. Terry credits that with being transformational and providing a profound source of inspiration that eventually found its way into his workplace where he now hosts the Malalino Spring Dinner benefit for Camp. He has been a dedicated member of our Camp community and we couldn’t be happier to have him on the Board.

Moving into the new year, Camp had an amazing opportunity on January 25, the eve of Paul Newman’s birthday: ringing the NYSE Closing Bell®! Camper families and Camp Board Members, including actress Bridget Moynahan, gathered together for this special honor, which kicked off our Founder’s Day celebration. As the celebration continued, we recognized some of the folks who help make all the Camp magic possible: our volunteers. We invited current volunteers to share their favorite memories on social media and unveiled a new, streamlined way to learn about and register for volunteer opportunities. Check it out for yourself, and see how you can join this outstanding group of individuals at www.holeinthewallgang.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities.

One short week later, Camp was back in NYC, helping Kravis Children’s Hospital at Mt. Sinai celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Zone. Joined by former camper turned actor Dexter Darden, our New York HOP team led an exciting sing-along and Camp-style games.

As we look ahead, we can’t wait to host some new friends at Camp during a Rare Diseases Family Camp planned for June and a Histocytology Family Weekend planned for the fall. These sessions reflect Camp’s commitment to provide programming to often underserved communities. We can’t wait to meet these new members of our Camp family!

From the CEO

Early in Camp’s history, we realized that behind every child with a serious illness is a family in crisis. It was an important realization, leading Camp to intentionally expand its service offerings to include siblings, parents and caregivers.

As I look through the pages of this family-oriented issue, I am so grateful to see that the lessons we learned in providing fun, healing experiences for children are translatable to the entire family. Creating unforgettable memories while facilitating connections with others who have walked similar paths brings the same results in both children and caretakers—smiles, friendships, a restored sense of possibility and a community of acceptance that replaces isolation.

Camp is now truly a family affair— not just in terms of those who we are so privileged to serve but also with the multiple generations of volunteers, FunRaisers and others who continue to support Paul Newman’s dream.

During the last several years, Camp’s Hospital Outreach Program (HOP) has grown significantly. It is now made up of a full-time team of more than 30 specialists who are delivering daily doses of laughter to more than 40 hospital locations in six states. As HOP continues to extend the healing hand of friendship to thousands more seriously ill children and their families across the Northeast, we are broadening smiles and the reach of our programming in ways never imagined.

In the coming years, we will be complementing the growth of HOP with a renewed commitment to deepening our programs for our existing Camp families. The enthusiastic response to CampOut, Family Camps and more frequent year-round programming has demonstrated that there is still more room for more Camp fun in the lives of our families. We will continue to do all that we can to identify those opportunities and surround our families with even more expressions of “a different kind of healing.”

Thank you for being part of our family. You are truly at the heart of who we are and all that we dream to be.
Thanks to Our 2015 Volunteers!

We celebrate the hundreds of volunteers who helped to make 2015 an exceptional year for Camp and our community of campers and counselors and nurses, by helping prepare our facilities for summer and weekend programs, at special events and in our administrative offices. For more info on volunteering, contact volunteers@holeinthewallgang.org
Thanks to Our 2015 Team Members!

Our thanks go out to our 2015 Team members. To join the Team, contact info@teamholeinthewall.org.
Volunteers from Hasbro kept the fun rolling at Hasbro Game Night.

On a snowy February evening, children and their families gathered in the fifth floor playroom at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and let their worries slip away. The group was diverse — children in the hospital for the very first time, as well as seasoned veterans. Moms, dads and siblings filled the space. Some were tentative, and others dove right in. But by the end of the evening, fast friends were made, and laughter could be heard echoing down the hall.

The gathering was part of the Tuesday Evening Playgroup that meets each week at the hospital. The activity was simple — decorating water bottles — and one that everyone enjoyed. But more important than the activity was the day’s just-relaxing vibe — one where everyone was free to choose how they wanted to participate.

Artistic expression took many forms, from scientific equations to vividly colored markers and stickers. Laughter was kept to a minimum, and jokes kept the mood light. And while most in attendance didn’t know each other at the start of the evening, as the event continued, everyone was partaking in good-natured teasing and vibrant conversations. One trickster in particular delighted in placing stickers on the backs of everyone in the room.

“Bringing Camp to the hospital is more than a special program or arts & crafts — it is creating the space of safety, respect and love in the medical setting,” said HOP Central New England Regional Manager Bryan Ballard. “By allowing families the opportunity to choose how to enjoy that space, we’re providing the greatest possible impact.”

Parents, too, found they could just relax and take time to enjoy the moment in their own way. For one mom, that meant pulling up a chair and crafting with her son. Two other parents sat together off to the side, sharing information, insights and tips about everything from treatment challenges and experiences to Disney World vacations. And another was able to find a moment, knowing her son was in good hands and having a great time, to catch up on a phone call.

When Hannah was in and out of the hospital for 10 months, Ethan and his brother, Ethan, were excited to socialize.

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Michelle, Matthew, Hannah and Ethan Camp it up at CampOut’s Aetna Fall Ball.

For more information on The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp’s Corporate Partners Program, please contact Ken at ken.alberti@holeinthewallgang.org or visit www.holeinthewallgang.org.

As an organization, Hasbro donated more than 1,000 toys and games to Camp last year, providing hours of fun to our campers and their families. These items also were welcome gifts for the campers who attended our annual holiday party, where every child took home a Hasbro toy or game.

“Our partnership with Hasbro is a model of our most effective partnerships, bringing together financial impact, employee and executive engagement, and mission alignment,” said Ken Alberti, chief development officer at Camp. “Hasbro truly understands the powerful impact play can have on children facing challenges, and it is exciting to work so closely with them to bring joy and laughter to those Camp serves.”

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Meet our FUNraisers!

What's a FUNraiser?
If you’ve ever been part of Team Hole in the Wall, Kids for Camp or created a fundraising event, then you’re a FUNraiser! That’s right, a FUNraiser! So get ready, because later this year, we’re bringing all these fundraising forces together and making it even easier for folks to get involved. Together, we can help more kids and their families experience the magic of Hole in the Wall. To learn more, contact Andrea Keeffe, manager, peer-to-peer programs, at 203-772-0522 or andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org.

Meet Dennis Rinaldi
Hometown: Harrison, NY
FUNraiser Activities: The Grove School 2v2 Basketball Tournament
How did you learn about Camp? What inspired you to get involved?
I first heard about Camp when my younger brother Daniel was a camper. Daniel has Proteus syndrome, a rare condition characterized by overgrowth of the bones, skin and other tissues. My brother attended Camp when he was 14 years old. I was a stubborn 15-year-old boy who wanted to attend sports camp instead. My mother had to drag me to go. Even though I was reluctant, I came to realize just how much Camp did for my brother, my family and myself. Camp has this contagious feeling. In addition to giving back, I truly feel that I am my best self when I am at Camp. I have now been a counselor at the summer program for three years. Why did you choose a basketball tournament fundraiser?
I love the game of basketball. Growing up with three brothers, we would have loved to be a part of a tournament like this to raise funds for Hole in the Wall. Being able to share my love of Camp and basketball has been such an amazing experience.

Meet Rose DiSanto
Hometown: Philadelphia, PA
FUNraiser Activities: DiSanto and Sterns’ Tini Party
How did you learn about Camp? What inspired you to get involved?
I read about Camp in an article in Life magazine in 1988. The article really moved me – the photos of those happy children, the love just shining through those images. I was hooked and have been volunteering ever since.

Meet Alan Gousie
Hometown: Lincoln, RI
FUNraiser activities: Fairfield Road Races, Choose Your Event 2013, Bandit 5K 2013, Ragnar Cape Cod 2015, NY Marathon 2015, Choose Your Event 2016
How did you learn about Camp? What inspired you to get involved?
I saw a Team Hole in the Wall shirt at a running event. I was sold! I was sincerely moved by Mr. Newman’s idea that every child deserves a chance to raise a little hell.

Why do you come to be involved?
There’s no finish line to this. Being even a small part of giving these children and their families the Camp experience is a thrill that never gets old.

How do you stay motivated through the long miles?
During training: By thinking about creative fundraising strategies. During races: By focusing on campers and their families.

What has your experience with Camp been like? Do you have a favorite?
My favorite Camp experiences are immeasurable! Impossible to pick a favorite experience with Camp. But one very special one is with a camper, Anique, who was HIV positive due to a tainted blood donation. One afternoon, we were holding hands, sitting in the rocking chairs on the front porch of the infirmary. We were missing the afternoon program because she was getting a blood transfusion so we were soaking up the sun, listening to the squeals and laughter of children playing at the pond and pool. Anique broke our silence and asked, “People are afraid to touch me. Aren’t you?” That moment, that question sums up so much about Camp to me. It is a place where there is no fear. Where children are lovingly taken care of – from a transfusion administered in a rocking chair on a front porch to a hand held to games played amid squeals of laughter and joy. Where children are treasured and loved – not because they are sick, but because they are simply children.

Alan shows off his medals from all four races at the 2016 Dopey Challenge!

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Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages, step right up, step right up to the 24th Annual Big Apple Bash, our circus-themed benefit, which was held at Lincoln Center in New York on November 7, 2015. Supported by lead sponsors American Packaging Corporation and LiDestri Food & Beverage, the event raised $1.4 million for Camp’s growing programs — a record for the New York circus benefit.

The evening kicked off with a picnic party planned for attending children featuring a variety of activities. The afternoon concludes with a High-Golf Pole match.

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp never sells or shares its donor privacy, while building a personal relationship with each donor. The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp is a community dedicated to providing “a different kind of healing” to seriously ill children and their families through a variety of year-round programs. The Camp delivers fun, friendship and a healthy dose of mischief through its signature summer program and weekend sessions at the Camp facility in Ashford, Conn., as well as outreach to hospitals, clinics and communities across the Northeast. All services are free of charge.

On January 25, the eve of Founder's Day, Hole in the Wall staff, campers and board members, including Bridget Moynahan, rang the NYSE Closing Bell™

Look inside to see how parents and caregivers are experiencing “a different kind of healing” all their own.