



At the Hero's Journey® program, campers discover what they are capable of while building friendships with fellow participants.



a seriousfun camp

## At Hole in the Wall, Campers Become the Hero of their Own Story

The Hero's Journey® Program marks 10 years of empowering programming for adolescents

Hole in the Wall's summer program has been an important aspect of our camper's lives for three decades, providing connection, joy and the chance to simply be a kid for children coping with serious illness. Campers aging out of the program at age 15 once found a dearth of programming available to provide similar support and help with the transition into adulthood. With that in mind, Hole in the Wall created the Hero's Journey® program in 2008.

Based on the teachings of Joseph Campbell, the Hero's Journey program pushes participants outside of their comfort zone to safely take on challenges, providing opportunities for self-discovery, camaraderie and appreciation. By learning wilderness first aid, and search and rescue, a camper transitions from someone who is cared for into a caregiver while building confidence, self-reliance and teamwork skills.

"What we focus on is not necessarily what is happening during the program, but rather what you can take away from it," said Greg Yeager, Hero's Journey program manager. "It's what you do with what you discover and where you spread it that is most important."

Campers spend their week at the Hero's Journey program living in yurts in the woods of Connecticut. They are responsible for preparing their own meals, and they bathe in a river. Though it is a rustic experience, the campsite is medically supported with two nurses that are always with the participants and easy access to additional care if needed.

The program elements are shrouded in mystery, so when campers arrive, they don't know what to expect. They participate in a series of group and personal challenges, rites of passage and ceremonies throughout their week, which are designed to help them act skillfully in the service of others, examine perceived limitations and discover previously unknown skills. For many participants, it is something they never imagined they would be able to do.

"I never thought of myself as a nature person, and I didn't think I would like the program because it was in the woods," camper Giana said. "But it showed me that there are parts of me that are adventurous. I was surprised by what I was able to do over the course of the week."

Due to a brain tumor when she was younger, Giana's vision is

now compromised. She struggles with multiple life-threatening medical challenges, which put her at risk for dehydration, overheating and exhaustion, and cause brain processing and motor-skill deficits. When she entered the program, she was unsure of her ability to handle it.

"When I arrived at the Hero's Journey program, my stamina and mentality were immediately put to a test that I thought I would fail," Giana said. "But the program really boosted my confidence. I become a leader instead of a follower."

Giana isn't the only one who saw a change in herself. Her mother immediately saw a difference as well.

"As a child with a serious medical issue, Giana has always depended on others for so much," Giana's mom, Donna, said. "When she came home, she started to do a lot more for herself instead of being so dependent."

And that really is what the program is all about.

To learn more about the Hero's Journey program, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/herosjourney](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/herosjourney), or contact Greg at [greg.yeager@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:greg.yeager@holeinthewallgang.org) or (860) 429-3444.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- What's New at Camp.....2
- CEO Message.....2
- Creative Corner.....2
- Hospital Outreach on the Go ....3
- Family Flats.....3
- Sheriff's Spotlight  
*Our corporate partners* .....3
- Volunteers & FUNraisers .....4
- Family Weekends.....5
- Our Events .....6
- Pardner Profile  
*Remarkable Camp staff & friends* ... 6
- Saddle Up for Camp .....7
- Highlighting community support* ..7
- Trail Blazers.....7



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# What's New at Camp

Spring has sprung! And with it, there are many exciting updates from Camp.

For folks looking to volunteer in Camp programming but aren't able to take part in onsite residential opportunities, regional opportunities with Hole in the Wall's Hospital and Family Outreach programs are now available. To participate, volunteers must have either volunteered with the summer or weekend program or attended a volunteer orientation. To allow even more people to join in the fun, Hole in the Wall's volunteer team is now offering regional volunteer orientations. Want to learn more? Visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/volunteeropportunities](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/volunteeropportunities).

Speaking of getting more folks involved, Camp's Family Outreach team is now pairing regional one-day parent retreats with CampOut for the kids. These combination events will provide camper parents who may struggle to find someone to care for their children with an opportunity to relax and connect with other parents who understand their challenges.

There have been some fantastic changes to Camp's facility as well. If you've been to Camp in the past year, you may have noticed some construction taking place behind the Dining Hall. The new structures will house the facilities department,

providing a more centralized location to tend to all of Camp's maintenance needs. In the coming months, the buildings that previously housed the facilities department will be retrofitted for programming.

Additionally, the Dining Hall has been undergoing some updates. This spring, campers and families found more accessible bathrooms, as well as unisex family bathrooms to better meet the needs of all onsite program attendees. And just in time for summer, the mini golf course will be completely renovated as well.

And last, but certainly not least, Hole in the Wall is excited to announce that Ryan Thompson has been appointed Camp's chief development and communications officer. Ryan has been a passionate member of the Camp community for many years, with 2018 marking his 10th consecutive summer as a volunteer cabin counselor. Since joining the staff seven years ago, Ryan has been an integral part of Hole in the Wall's fundraising team, working beside the CEO to deepen relationships with Camp's



*Camp volunteers have the MOST fun. Want to be a part of it? Join one of our upcoming regional volunteer orientations.*

most generous supporters, corporate partners and celebrity friends. In his past role as Camp's chief communications officer, Ryan also led efforts to centralize and transform Camp's communications.

It's looking like a great summer, and we can't wait.

# From the CEO

It's hard to believe it's been 30 years since Hole in the Wall first opened its gates. In that time, Camp has continued to grow to serve an ever-increasing number of children and families with deeper levels of care, but never so much as during the last five years.

Since our Board approved our strategic plan in December 2012, our year-round staff has gone from more than 60 to more than 90 compassionate and committed employees. Our Hospital Outreach® program nearly doubled the number of locations where we provide services from 22 to 41, and we launched CampOut – which brings Hole in the Wall to the homes and hometowns of campers in need of a Camp booster shot. We have also introduced research and evaluation initiatives, which allow us to refine our programmatic offerings in real time and begin to measure the longer-lasting impact of Camp services.

In those five short years, the number of children and family members served has more than doubled to more than 20,000 annually – many of whom are served multiple times a year through a variety of Camp programs. And our operating budget has grown from \$9.7 million to \$12.8 million, allowing us to continue to keep all of our programming completely free of charge.

Since our founding in 1988, we have been blessed with an engaged Camp community of board members, staff, supporters and volunteers who remain committed to sharing Paul Newman's vision of "a different kind of healing" with seriously ill children and their families. Paul's dream was bold, audacious and noble, and his motivation was grounded in humility, as ours continues to be. As we look to the future, we will continue to push the envelope, providing programming to those most in need and isolated by their illness. This fall, in partnership with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, we will offer our first ever offsite Family Weekend in Pa. We are also exploring how to provide services at Camp to families of children with Epidermolysis Bullosa, a group of rare



*Jimmy joins some campers for an exciting game of Jenga, proving that a solid foundation is key for growth.*

genetic conditions that cause the skin to be very fragile and blister easily. We hope to have several of these families attend fall Family Weekends to provide feedback on how we can best adapt our programming to meet their needs.

Thank you for being a part of our Camp family and for your continued belief in our mission as we embark on the next 30 years of hope and healing.

## Creative CORNER

*A showcase for our families' creativity*

**Camper Nathan loves Hole in the Wall so much, he made this Camp-themed shirt during a recent Hospital Outreach® visit.**



# Hospital Outreach<sup>®</sup> on the GO

*Highlights from our exciting year-round program that brings the joy of Camp to seriously ill children in locations across the Northeast.*

On a recent Thursday morning, the Oncology Clinic at St. Christopher's Children's Hospital in Philadelphia bubbled with laughter. Children, many hooked up to IV pumps infusing their weekly chemotherapy treatments, sat around a table grinning from ear to ear as they poured, mixed and squished their way to glittered slime creations during a playgroup hosted by Hole in the Wall Hospital Outreach<sup>®</sup> Program (HOP) specialist Chelsea. As more children arrived, they were greeted with enthusiastic hugs as they reconnected with friends that had been found around this same table week after week.

"The oncology clinic at St. Christopher's is like a family," said HOP Philadelphia Regional Manager Michele "Gill" McKenna. "It's incredible to be a part of building that community and seeing the kids and families come together to support each other."

As the children laughingly tried to blow slime bubbles in what they dubbed the "Boogie Challenge," their parents enjoyed precious moments engaged in play with their child or catching up on personal business

while their kids were safely having fun. It was a great opportunity for everyone to relax during a stressful time and simply enjoy themselves.

Elsewhere in the hospital, HOP Specialist Frankie visited children right at their bedsides, bringing crafts and other activities. For 13-year-old Morquia, it was a special day, as she was heading home. Always excited for HOP visits, she took a few moments to make a planet-themed craft before leaving.

Across the city, at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), and across the river at Cooper University Hospital in Camden, NJ, five more HOP specialists were hard at work. Throughout both hospitals, Specialists Bridget, Carly, Elise, Kyle and Simone brought Camp cheer during bedside visits and additional playgroups.

"At this week's group, we had a table full of craft lovers," said Elise who was hosting a playgroup at CHOP's oncology clinic. "A young girl was talking about how she wants to be an artist, so another mom, who

was very artistic, started showing her ways to draw. They bonded over their project, and as the little girl left, the mom gave her an incredible canvas she had made her during the playgroup. The little girl was so excited and happy. It was sweet to watch the whole group bonding over crafts."

Day in and day out, Camp's HOP teams are providing these moments of community, hope and laughter throughout Philadelphia, as well as the greater Northeast.

To learn more about Camp's Hospital Outreach Program, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/hospitaloutreach](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/hospitaloutreach), or contact Chris Pontbriant, interim director, Hospital Outreach at [chris.pontbriant@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:chris.pontbriant@holeinthewallgang.org).



*Above and below: At a recent playgroup at St. Christopher's Children's Hospital, children had some fun with slime.*

*Below left: HOP brings activities right to children's bedsides in the hospital, providing a much-needed break from worry and medical challenges.*



## Family Flats

*Stories from current and former camper families.*

Two-time camper Carly feels that there is something very special about the connections she has with Camp friends. She enjoys CampOut events because they help her extend those important Camp connections beyond summer.

So, when this year's Under the Sea-themed Fall Ball fell on her birthday, she decided to spend her day there, with her parents, Kevin and Sara, and her Camp friends. Realizing there was a birthday in their midst, the CampOut team surprised Carly with a Camp-style birthday celebration, complete with birthday chair. "It was like my birthday was at Camp!" Carly said. "I was really happy to be sitting there and seeing so many familiar faces."

"It was just a great feeling, just to be surrounded by other campers and people who all understand each other," said Carly's mom, Sara. And that sense of community did not end at Fall Ball. "A couple weeks later, she was attending a local festival and there was a little girl who recognized her and said, 'Hey! You're Carly!'" said her mom.

Beyond Carly's birthday celebration, Fall Ball – the largest CampOut event of the year – wowed the 215 guests in attendance. The party took place in the Aetna corporate cafeteria, which had been transformed into an Under the Sea wonderland and filled with fun activities by 65 Aetna employee volunteers in the two days leading up to the event.

"The games they had set up for the kids, the crafts and the photo booth ... they were all great," said Carly's dad, Kevin. "It is just a small taste of Camp. I can see



*Carly gets silly with a friend in the Fall Ball Photo Booth.*

why Carly likes to go back every year."

"I really liked the coloring table and the crafts, like making mermaid wands," Carly said. She said that as she made her way through the activities with her friends, it made her feel like she was back at Camp. "I think that the Fall Ball helps bring Camp back to many of the campers because they get to experience a small part of Camp that they would normally see in the summer," she explained.

"It was clear that Carly and her friends wanted their own table and the parents sat at another," said Carly's mom, Sara. Watching her daughter enjoy Fall Ball this way, Sara said felt like she was able to understand more about what Camp is for Carly. "There are all these songs and dance moves. For us, this was a window into something that we don't get to see."

To learn more about CampOut, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/campout](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/campout) or contact Sarah Eio Smithson, director, outreach programs, at [campout@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:campout@holeinthewallgang.org) or (860) 429-3444.

## Sheriff's Spotlight

*A shout-out to our dedicated corporate partners.*

For more than a decade, Aetna has been a generous friend to Camp, providing support at all levels of the company, starting with senior leadership, who set an example of giving back. This is above and beyond the generous funding the company provides, as well as the program support they offer.

"Aetna has been a perfect example of an engaged corporate partner," said Camp CEO Jimmy Canton. "We are so grateful for their longstanding friendship and the incredible joy their far-reaching efforts bring to the children and families we are so privileged to serve."

For years, Aetna has provided funding for Camp's sickle cell programming, as well as research and evaluation initiatives. They also sponsor the annual Camp Challenge Ride. And for the past three years, they have played host to CampOut's biggest annual event – Fall Ball – generously allowing CampOut to transform their cafeteria into a swanky event space, donating supplies and providing many employee volunteers.

"This year's Fall Ball was an incredible event – our largest to date," said Sarah Eio Smithson, director, outreach programs for Hole in the Wall. "We would have been lost without the support of Aetna, which helped with so many aspects of the event, from preparation to staffing the event itself. They were instrumental to the evening's success."



*Aetna employees always have a strong showing of support at the Camp Challenge Ride.*

Nearly 200 Aetna employees also helped spruce up Camp's facility at nine Helping Hands Workdays in the last year alone. Another 82 FUNraised for Hole in the Wall at the Camp Challenge Ride and Ragnar Relay Cape Cod.

"We are privileged and honored to work with Hole in the Wall, supporting the amazing services they provide to children and their families," said Chris Montross, senior managing director, head of employee activation at Aetna. "We always have a significant number of employees that are interested in volunteering at events – many who come back over and over – and they consistently tell us that they find the experience to be among the most rewarding things they do as an Aetna employee."

For more information about Hole in the Wall's Corporate Partners Program, please visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/get-involved](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/get-involved) or contact Andrea Keefe, Camp's manager, peer-to-peer programs, at [andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org) or (203) 772-0522.

# Thank You

## to our 2017 Volunteers & FUNraisers!

We celebrate the thousands of volunteers, athletes and community event organizers who helped make 2017 an outstanding year for Camp and our campers! While there are too many hands and hearts to list here, your impact reverberates across the organization, and we are so grateful for all that you do.



### VOLUNTEERS

**468**

Summer Program Volunteers

**616**

Family Weekend Volunteers

**144**

Medical Volunteers

**597**

Hospital Outreach Volunteers

**412**

Family Outreach Volunteers

**552**

Development Volunteers

**1,074**

Helping Hands  
Workday Volunteers

**308**

Administrative Volunteers

**30**

Facilities Volunteers

**228**

Parent Volunteers

**TOTAL VOLUNTEERS:**

**4,429**



*"I've been wanting to come back to Camp as a volunteer since I left over 10 years ago, and like the young campers, I am 'campsick' now that I've returned home...While much has changed, even more has stayed the same, and the 'let's make this happen' attitude that lifts up and empowers campers, families, volunteers and staff is stronger than ever...The mountains that staff and volunteers continue to move behind the scenes, like it's not any big deal, to ensure that another human feels special is a tribute to not only the people who do the work, but the organization itself."*

– Erica Zapatka, program volunteer



*"Growing up I was fortunate. I had a 'normal' childhood. It breaks my heart that the kids who go to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp have to fight for theirs. They shouldn't have to. They are true heroes for battling through surgeries and chemo weekly. If they can do that, then my friends and I can do push-ups for hours and help give them a truly deserved Camp experience."*

– Andy Berman, owner Mental Grit Fitness and organizer, Push Against Cancer FUNraiser for Camp



*Running the NY Marathon for Hole in the Wall was a truly humbling experience and a huge accomplishment for me. The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp was just awesome in every way, and I will always support the good work you do!!*

– Mariellen Heffernan, NYC Marathoner

### FUNRAISERS

**822** athletes across **8** events

**121** Community Events

**TOTAL RAISED:**

**\$3,025,235**

# Family Weekends are so much fun

Each year, more than 1,100 children and family members find a community of acceptance at Hole in the Wall's spring and fall Family Weekends. Enjoying Camp activities while surrounded by others who understand their challenges, families are able to relax, play together and be reminded that they are so much more than a diagnosis.



# Our Events

Highlights of our latest benefit events and those to come...

Bringing together more than 375 Camp supporters at Hard Rock Café in New York City, the 26th Annual Big Apple Bash raised an incredible \$1.6 million for Hole in the Wall and broke its previous record for the 5th straight year. Once again, presenting sponsors American Packaging Corporation and LiDestri Food & Drink rallied an impressive group of supporters who enjoyed a night filled with good food, family-friendly activities and great people.

The evening got off to an impressive start, as guests were greeted by a Big Apple Circus juggler and Lauralee, a LED stilt walker from Cirque-tacular. As the evening progressed, they were wowed with an original roller skating act by Dandino from Big Apple Circus and a LED Cyr Wheel performance from Cirque-tacular's David.

But the true star of the night was camper Elsa, who spoke to the audience about how her diagnosis of Charcot-Marie-

Tooth Disease, a form of muscular dystrophy that causes weakness and chronic pain, impacts her life, describing Camp as the "best thing that ever happened to me." She then inspired the crowd with a spirited rendition of "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars. Camp CEO Jimmy Canton also shared updates from Camp, while event co-chairs Stefani LiDestri and Peter Schottland thanked supporters for their generosity and teamwork.

Camper families got in on the fun as well, with a special party just for them prior to the event. Nearly 200 camper family members enjoyed goodies, crafts and dancing completely free of charge, thanks to the generosity of event donors.

## UPCOMING 2018 CAMP BENEFIT EVENTS

### Bandits in the Big Apple 30th Anniversary Celebration PlayStation Theater, New York, NY – September 24

Saddle up as Hole in the Wall returns to New York City to celebrate 30 years of fun, friendship and Camp magic. "Raise a little hell" with us in the Big Apple and enjoy a festive evening featuring cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and dinner, culminating in a mainstage performance by Hole in the Wall campers and celebrity friends.

### 27th Annual Big Apple Bash New York, NY – November 10

Join The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp family for an evening of Camp fun for all ages! Guests will enjoy a private performance of the Big Apple Circus followed by an evening reception at Tavern on the Green that includes a dinner buffet, cocktails, kids zone, music, dancing and more! Thanks to the generosity of our donors, camper families will attend the circus free of charge.

Learn more about all of our Camp-hosted benefit events at [www.holeinthewallgang.org/ourevents](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/ourevents) or contact Director of Special Events Jennifer Weeks at [jennifer.weeks@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:jennifer.weeks@holeinthewallgang.org).



Left, Above, Right: Circus performances, dancing and food, oh my! There was something fun for everyone at the 26th Annual Big Apple Bash.

Above Right: Event co-chairs Stefani LiDestri and Peter Schottland are the masterminds behind the success of the Bash.

## Pardner Profile

A place to shout about a few of the people who make Camp the remarkable place it is.

For the Littersts, supporting Hole in the Wall is a family affair.

"Pretty much everyone in our family has their hands in Camp," said Dawne Litterst, who has been a long-time supporter and volunteer.

It started 20 years ago when Dawne's father, Larry, volunteered for the first time, setting in motion the enthusiastic involvement of Dawne, her husband, Bob, their three sons, Rob, Jack and Jeff, and even her siblings and nephews.

"My dad always raved about what an amazing place Camp was, so when we moved back to the Northeast from Texas, we started going to Gala, and it was incredible," Dawne said. "We started bringing each of the kids when they turned 13, and they loved it. Christmas and Gala were their favorite days of the year."

So, it was no surprise when Dawne and Bob's oldest son, Rob, started volunteering at Hole in the Wall for a week each summer while he was in college.

"Rob would leave the Camp and call to tell us how he had the most amazing week of his life," Dawne shared. "I was thrilled that he was so impacted by Camp."

A few years later, their middle son Jack spent two years on summer staff – one in the cabins and one at the Hero's Journey® program. He has also volunteered for many years in both the summer and weekend program, as well as with the Hospital Outreach® Program. And two years ago, Dawne and Bob volunteered for the first time themselves.

This past summer, their youngest son, Jeff, joined Camp as a cabin counselor. And for the final session, he was joined by his parents, Dawne and Bob; brothers, Rob and Jack; and Rob's fiancé, Leigh, who all volunteered together for the week.

"It was one of the best weeks of our lives," Dawne said. "I don't normally get to see my kids in a role like that, and it was amazing to see how compassionate and patient all three



The Litterst family took over the Blue Unit during session 8 of 2017, with six family members volunteering simultaneously!

of them were. I would do it every year if we could."

The family has been generous financial supporters of Camp as well. In addition to attending Gala, Bob and Dawne contributed to build a pavilion at the pool and towards Lulu's Lodge. They also funded a cabin renovation during the recent updates. Bob, Rob, Jack and Jeff have all participated in AngelRide, and Dawne's brother FUNraised for Camp, asking for donations to Hole in the Wall for his son's first birthday.

"Camp is such a special experience," Dawne said. "Being able to work with the awesome summer staff is such a privilege, and the campers are so inspiring. We derive so much joy from being there. What we give to Camp is nothing compared to what Camp gives us in return."

To learn more about volunteering at Hole in the Wall, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/volunteers](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/volunteers) or contact Ellen Buus, director, volunteers, at [ellen.buus@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:ellen.buus@holeinthewallgang.org) or (860) 429-3444.

# 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.*

It all started with nine high-school friends – Adam Luchansky, Andrew Porter, Brett Reis, Emil DeFrancesco, Glen Kendall, Kale Butcher, Luke Dudley, Matt Silver and Ryan Squillante – and a boxer dog named Jericho. Looking for a way to stay close while supporting causes they cared about, the friends founded the Boxer Bowtie Club in 2015, creating a platform where they could give back while inspiring the same mindset in other young professionals.

Since then, the group has hosted three fundraising events in New York City and one in Dallas – and has doubled its membership. They are planning to launch their third chapter in California in the Summer of 2019. Camp is fortunate to be the organization's New York charity partner, receiving more than \$150,000 over the last three years.

"Having gone to high school in Weston, Conn., we were all familiar with Paul Newman and his philanthropic efforts," said founding member Adam Luchansky. "We knew Hole in the Wall was the right partner, and each time we visit the Camp, our commitment to the cause is reinforced."

Looking to generate excitement and offer a unique experience in a packed New York fundraising environment, Boxer Bowtie hosted its first event – Cards for Camp – aboard a yacht. The casino night included a cruise around Manhattan harbor and featured a former camper who spoke about his experience at Camp and the positive impact it made on his life. The event inspired a loyal following, with many attendees returning year after year.

"It was a priority for us to offer attendees a memorable experience, and even more important to ensure that they left the event with a clear understanding of Hole in the Wall's mission and impact," said founding member Matt Silver. "Our goal is for the attendees to leave the event as empowered ambassadors of Hole in the Wall, who are committed to supporting and volunteering with the organization for the rest of their lives."



*Above: Boxer Bowtie Club members from left to right: Byron Sanders, Lori Silver, Braeden Jehle, Matt Silver, Brett Reis, Adam Luchansky, Kale Butcher, Randall Brobson, Luke Dudley, Glen Kendall, Ryan Squillante, Adam Gross, Emil DeFrancesco, Andrew Porter.*



*Left: Boxer Bowtie Club always welcomes camper families to their events, and their Mascot, Jericho, will happily pose for a photo opportunity.*

The club members also have proven to be committed supporters of Camp, volunteering on several occasions, as well as participating in Camp events like Polo for Children, Big Apple Bash, and the Camp Challenge Ride & Bandit 5K.

"Camaraderie is a core value at Hole in the Wall, so it is wonderful to partner with the Boxer Bowtie Club, who has friendship at the core of everything they do," said Andrea Keefe, manager, peer-to-peer programs. "We are so grateful for their passion for Camp and incredible ability to inspire their community to support our

mission. We look forward to being a part of their future growth."

Boxer Bowtie is working hard on this year's event, which promises to be their best yet. It will take place at the Hudson Mercantile Building on September 29. Visit [www.boxerbowtie.org/nyc](http://www.boxerbowtie.org/nyc) for more information.

To learn more about becoming a FUNraiser for Camp, visit [www.holeinthewallgang.org/FUNraiser](http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/FUNraiser), or contact Andrea at [andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org) or (203) 772-0522.

## Trail Blazers

*Amazing athletes wrangle friends and family to support Camp*

Four years ago, Robert Cote was diagnosed with bladder cancer. With limited treatment options available, he had his bladder removed in the fall of 2014 and a new bladder constructed from his small intestine. Six short months later, Robert ran his very first marathon – the Boston Marathon – to support Hole in the Wall.

"I felt like God had given me a second chance at life, so I wanted to do something that would make a difference in someone else's life," Robert said. "I'm a runner and a cyclist and thought maybe I could do one of those things I enjoy in order to do that."

So, he contacted the Boston Athletic Association to find out what charities were involved with them. Just three charities into the list, he saw Hole in the Wall, did some research and was hooked.

"I have five kids myself, so when I started looking at Hole in the Wall, I knew it was the organization for me," Robert said.

But he almost didn't make it. About a month before the marathon, Robert was experiencing severe anemia as a result of the surgery. He had to receive iron infusions a couple of times a week, and his doctor had some reservations about him taking on such a taxing event.

"I thought, 'I didn't come this far to quit,'" Robert said. "I ran the marathon, and though those last three miles were so hard, I kept thinking about the kids and the commitment and support of my friends and family, and I knew I had to do it. The next thing I knew, I was crossing the finish line."

And a month later, he was out supporting Camp again, this time at AngelRide, a two-day cross-Conn. cycling event. He has participated in both events every year since, as well as

several other athletic fundraisers for Hole in the Wall.

"I am motivated by the difference I've been able to make in the lives of these kids and families," Robert said. "Having volunteered in the summer and weekend program, you see how Camp helps them. Thinking about it helps me cross the finish line."

Not only does Robert participate in so many FUNraiser events, he also consistently crushes his fundraising, having raised more than \$40,000 in just four years. In addition to continuing to ask his steady supporters, he is always looking for new avenues of support while finding inspiring ways to contribute himself.

To learn more about Hole in the Wall FUNraisers, contact Andrea Keefe, manager, peer-to-peer programs at [andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org](mailto:andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org) or (203) 772-0522.



*Robert Cote's significant medical challenges did not stop him from conquering multiple marathons for Hole in the Wall.*



Founded in 1988 by Paul Newman, 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. In keeping with Camp's core value of Camaraderie, Hole in the Wall fosters a community of purposeful inclusion through a commitment to diversity and equity.

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp never sells or shares its donor names and addresses. This policy reflects our commitment as a charity to maintain the highest integrity in order to protect and ensure privacy, while building a personal relationship with each donor.

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The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp  
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<http://www.holeinthewallgang.org>



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