



a seriousfun camp

THE HOLE IN THE WALL GANG CAMP

GAZETTE

SPRING/SUMMER
2026



Board Member and actress Bridget Moynahan, former CEO Jimmy Canton, Camper Victoria, Board Co-Chair Jeff Horstman, Former Camper and Summer Staff Dennis Rinaldi, and Board Member and artist Melissa Newman cut the ribbon on the new Maryland location.

CAMP'S MARYLAND LOCATION IS NOW OPEN!

This spring brought the ribbon cutting and first Family Camps at our new location on the Eastern Shore

On Thursday, April 23, Camp marked an important milestone as more than 100 community officials, celebrity friends, Camp supporters and key partners gathered under brilliant blue skies to celebrate the completion of renovations on the first phase of The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp's second location on the Eastern Shore of Maryland! The event was the culmination of years of work to renovate more than 50,000 square feet of residential, program and dining space, which is now providing the backdrop for intentionally designed overnight programming that brings joy, connection and "a different kind of healing" to children with serious illnesses and their families who are often isolated by their diagnosis.

"All of us at Camp were over the moon delighted to celebrate the ribbon cutting at our second Hole in the Wall location in Queenstown, bringing much-needed programming to children in the Mid-Atlantic and beyond, including those in the rare and ultra-rare disease community," said former Hole in the Wall CEO Jimmy Canton. "This new facility fills a void in the region and ensures that those most in need of the healing power of Camp are able to find friendship, play and respite in the company of other families who uniquely understand the challenges they face."

This first phase of renovations transformed existing buildings, as well as outdoor spaces, into an inclusive and thoughtfully designed facility with peaceful and inviting spaces to support children, parents, caregivers and siblings. Updates included a family space where families can gather to play and relax; a parent relaxation room where caregivers can rest and connect with other parents; a cozy, barrier-free theater removing impediments for aspiring actors and singers of all ages; two creative areas for arts & crafts and a maker's space; temperature-controlled and accessible residential rooms; a state-of-the-art infirmary with three observation/overnight rooms, a reception area, a pharmacy and medical equipment; and much more. Looking to the future,

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plans are in development for additions to the location.

Just a few short weeks later, the Maryland location welcomed families to the first of eight Family Camps planned for this year, which will each welcome up to 15 families. At the first Camp, which served families of children with sickle cell disease, families enjoyed arts & crafts, archery, Stage Night and so much more, surrounded by others who understand the challenges they face. But even more importantly, these families walked away with renewed hope and the understanding that they aren’t defined by their diagnosis.

“It was incredible to finally see our Maryland location filled with laughter and play,” Jimmy said. “It has always been our charge to do everything in our power to bring the healing of Hole in the Wall to those children and families most profoundly impacted by their diagnosis. With the launch of these Family Camps, we are doing just that, building community among those who previously did not have it.”

It was a wonderful start to programming in Maryland, with so much more joy, hope and healing to come in the weeks ahead.



FROM OUR NEW CEO

It is a true honor and privilege to be selected to lead Hole in the Wall into its next chapter. I am so grateful for the board’s trust and confidence, as well as that of our staff and community. I step into this role having learned from an extraordinary leader. Jimmy’s vision, heart and commitment to Camp have shaped so much of what we are today, and I am excited to carry that into the future.

I first applied to be a Hole in the Wall summer camp counselor after my freshman year of college. I didn’t know what to expect. I thought a camp for very sick children would be sad.

Instead, I walked into a place of pure, unfiltered, almost rebellious joy.

I saw kids who had spent days in hospital beds flying down ziplines. I saw campers – exhausted from chemotherapy – singing at the top of their lungs and dancing in the dining hall. I saw children who had been called fragile, who had spent so much of their lives hearing “be careful” or “you can’t do that,” suddenly full of choice and possibility.

I met parents carrying unimaginable loss from the death of their child – who somehow still found joy, and even peace, in connection with others with shared experience.

I was so captured by that magic that I came back the next year – and the next. Now, twenty-five years later, I’ve had the privilege of serving in many roles at Camp – from Camp Director to Chief Program Officer.

During this time, I have had a front-row seat to people choosing time and time again to spread seeds of joy where it is needed most. The experience for the children and families we serve is transformative and healing – it is an antidote to isolation. Camp teaches me over and over again that making the world more beautiful doesn’t mean we need to fix things we can’t or pretend things aren’t hard. It means looking at what may feel dark, or unfair, or heavy, and fiercely injecting joy into it. It means creating a space where people feel safe, respected and loved. It means scattering those seeds so the beauty can bloom.

I know transitions can bring questions or even a bit of uncertainty. My focus is to make sure we move through this with steadiness, clarity and a strong sense of who we are and where we are going. We have so much important and meaningful work ahead of us, and I am so so excited to be stepping into this role. As Paul Newman said, “The need is great, and so are the opportunities to make a difference.” I look forward to continuing to make a difference alongside this incredible community.

Hilary Axtmayer
Chief Executive Officer



Everyone had a blast on the hayless hayride at our First Maryland Family Camp – including our new CEO.





FAREWELL FROM JIMMY

How can I possibly capture how much this sacred place and organization have meant to me and how life changing my time with Hole in the Wall has been. No less than 38 of my 59 years have been spent inspired by Camp's call to love, to heal, to play, to grieve and to dream. Camp has continuously invited me to be my best self.

It is unimaginable to do justice to the gratitude I feel for the countless lives that have altered the course of mine with their bravery, their friendship, their honesty, their creativity, their dedication, their optimism, their loyalty and their love.

Our beloved founder spoke of luck in his life – the benevolence of it in his life and the brutality of bad luck in the lives of others. I'm so lucky – to have had the privilege to be of service to such brave children and their families. To recognize the injustice, inequity and unfairness of children who are sick and the suffering and isolation that accompany it. I'm so lucky to have my health when so many do not. I'm so lucky to have been gifted these many years to try to make a difference.

Of the many insights and blessings Hole in the Wall has offered me, one of the most important has been to be reminded of the fragility of life and how temporary it is. The children we are privileged to serve remind me how unfair life can be. That none of us who have been given the gift of health have earned it. We are, as our Founder once said, simply the passive recipients of good luck...and a life lived well finds ways to recognize that and care for those not afforded that good luck.

The Sufi mystic Rumi once said, "Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes. For those who love with their hearts and soul there is no separation." We love few things with our heart and soul. I love Camp with my heart and my soul. There is no need to say goodbye. There will be no separation.

What a joy and what an honor it has been to help bring it this far.
As Paul so wisely encouraged us, "You take it from here. Raise a little hell."

Jimmy Canton
Former Chief Executive Officer



Since 1988 Jimmy Canton has been a fixture at Hole in the Wall, and over the years, he has served as a cabin counselor, unit leader, Camp director and CEO. Since taking on the role of CEO 23 years ago, Jimmy has overseen tremendous growth, working across the organization to develop programs that answered important needs for those Camp serves. Understanding that behind every child with a serious illness is a family in crisis, Family Camp programs launched. When all of the beds were full in Connecticut, but it was clear that there was greater need, the Hospital Outreach Program (HOP)SM began, bringing the magic of Hole in the Wall right to children's bedsides and playrooms. And when a medical needs assessment uncovered thousands of children and families in the Mid-Atlantic in need of Camp's healing programs, Camp took the first steps to open a second location. And under Jimmy's leadership, phase one renovations of that location are now complete.

All of us at Hole in the Wall are grateful to Jimmy for his nearly 40 years of heartfelt service to our campers and their families. Camp is where it is today in large part because of Jimmy's leadership, and we wish him all the best on his well-deserved retirement.

Jimmy through the years



TRAIL
BLAZERS

FUNraisers support Camp for a variety of reasons – aligning their passions and rallying their communities to raise funds for our growing programs. We asked a few of our athletes why they run in support of Camp. Here’s what they said:



Cousins Aaron Belletsky and Jenna Williams are running the 2026 TCS New York City Marathon in honor of their late cousin Carly DeMartino, former camper, summer staff and volunteer.



Aaron

Hole in the Wall was something Carly championed very bravely throughout her battle with cancer. We would also often talk about how much she loved Camp and how happy she was when she was there. While honoring Carly’s memory is paramount for me in this experience, I am also happy that running the marathon will give me new memories of training and fundraising with my cousin Jenna.

Jenna

Agape love is “in sickness and health” love and “for better or worse” love. I have learned throughout my life that agapic love is the only kind of love that is lasting, unwavering, true love, and my cousin, Carly, was the embodiment of it. Running the TCS NYC Marathon is my way of continuing Carly’s agapic love story and giving back to the place that allowed her to be her happiest, most authentic self, while helping other children facing serious illnesses experience the same magic and compassion that meant so much to Carly.

Future Sister/Brother-in-Laws Reagan Carey and Griffin O’Neill run to honor Reagan’s experience as a camper and to ensure more campers can find a home at Hole in the Wall.

Reagan

I ran the United Airlines NYC Half because, as a former camper, Hole in the Wall allowed me to truly be myself and that changed my life forever. Now, I take an opportunity to volunteer, spread awareness and raise funds so more campers can experience that joy and life-changing feeling that Camp is.



Griffin

Running the Boston Marathon was a physical challenge, but it pales in comparison to the strength and resilience shown by the children and families served by Camp every single day, including my future sister-in-law, Reagan. During a difficult chapter of her life, Camp provided her with a sense of normalcy, strength and belonging. I ran to honor her courage, to support families navigating unimaginable challenges, and to help ensure that Hole in the Wall can continue changing lives for years to come.



Husband and Wife Grant and Char Taylor run because they are moved by Camp’s mission.

Grant

I have run the TCS NYC Marathon three times with three different charities. Each was a good experience, but none hit me quite like running for Camp. At the pasta party I got to hear from one of the Camp participants in addition to hearing more about the experiences Camp provides for its campers and their families. It moved me and gave my run the next day an added layer of purpose. I’m proud to do my little part for this awesome organization.

Char

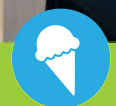
I learned about Hole in the Wall from my husband. I was so impressed and inspired with the enthusiasm and motivation to provide such amazing opportunities and experiences for these kids and their families. I have been involved with many different running groups and was so amazed with Hole in the Wall that I had to be a part of it for the United Airlines NYC Half. I look forward to my next race with this group.



There are plenty of opportunities to write your running story with Hole in the Wall – whether marathons, half marathons or 5Ks. To learn more, email FUNraiser@holeinthewallgang.org.

FAMILY CAMPS

Each fall and spring, families gather at our Connecticut location for a weekend of joy and friendship. As they cross Camp's gate, they leave their cares behind and can simply be a family outside of the confines of a diagnosis. They laugh, create, discover and enjoy time together. Check out some of our favorite moments from recent weekends.





FAMILY FLATS

This spring, the CampOut program piloted a storytelling workshop for our campers. Rooted in research that shows creative self-expression through storytelling has a positive impact on children navigating serious illnesses, the program ran from February through May, with touchpoints that supported campers through their story creation process. At the conclusion of the program, campers gathered together to showcase their stories and celebrate their accomplishments.

Themes explored some of the many challenges campers face in their lives, from bullying and isolation to embracing your differences, with lead characters that included a tiny pickle super hero, a pig who's just too pink and a human with a robot arm who wants nothing more than to play in the NBA. Overall, the program provided an opportunity for campers to explore some of the challenges they face in a safe and supported way, through fiction.

Here are a few excerpts from the stories campers shared.



Lola the pig is at her farm and Max, the farmer, does not treat her very well. Max does not like Lola because she's different from all the other animals, so Max puts her in the backyard next to all the barrels and hay with no blanket and pillow. Lola feels sad about where she sleeps. Lola thinks that Max does not treat her very well and wants to move. So, that's exactly what she asks.

Lola asks Max if she can move farms and Max says, "Yes! I would love that!"

So, Lola goes to a new farm. Lola looks at the farm and sees that there's a playground. She also sees that there's lots of animals having fun. The people that are playing are playing tag and sliding on the slides and swinging on the swings.

Lola felt a little nervous because she's at a new farm, and she doesn't think anyone will want to be friends with her.



Rose is a 14-year-old girl who lives in a house in the Boston area with her mom, Angela, dad, Robert, brother, Ben, and service dog, Goldie.

Rose goes to a large public high school where she is bullied. Although she likes learning, she feels alone there because she doesn't have many friends. She also experiences ableism, as she needs a wheelchair to get around but many other kids use the only elevator even though they don't have permission.

One day, Rose has a stroke and is rushed to the hospital. There, she has a very hard time; it is kind of indescribable.

But then, she starts seeing a therapist who reminds her of her worth.

Rose then goes to rehab, where she continues to recover physically and mentally.



BENEFIT EVENTS

It was another magical evening at Boston Children's Museum, as more than 800 members of the Camp community gathered for the 32nd Annual Beantown Bash! Three floors of activities kept guests engaged throughout the event, which raised more than \$1.8 million thanks to the extraordinary fundraising efforts of presenting sponsor Ken's Foods.

A wide array of activities were offered, delighting supporters and camper families alike. New England Patriots players Robert Spillane and Sebastian Gutierrez shared autographs and photo opportunities with excited guests, while fan-favorite mascots, Pat Patriot, Wally and Tessie, kept the energy up with high-fives and playful hi-jinks throughout the night! Magicians amazed the crowd with humor and impressive sleight-of-hand. Guests of all ages also enjoyed Amazing Animal Ambassadors, karaoke, hair tinsel, caricature drawings, craft stations, air hockey, race car competitions, interactive exhibits and so much more.

Throughout the night, the Silent Auction prompted some friendly competition as attendees bid on coveted experiences and items, such as a luxury stay at Four Seasons Anguilla, a Mahjong Social at PKL and a jersey signed by Patriots quarterback Drake Maye.

But no Camp event would be complete without some tasty treats, and the Bash didn't disappoint. A variety of cocktails, mocktails, passed hors d'oeuvres, a buffet dinner, desserts and a Beer Garden Tent offering craft brews courtesy of Fiddlehead Brewing Company kept bellies filled and tastebuds happy!





SHERIFF SPOTLIGHT

CVS Health and Aetna believe that healthy communities are thriving communities, so when the organization was looking for philanthropic partners, they prioritized supporting charities that help people overcome barriers to improving their health and well-being. Hole in the Wall was a perfect fit.

“Our work with The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp is one of the clearest examples of how investing in community can directly improve lives,” said Faith Weiner, executive director with CVS Health. “For many medically complex children and their caregivers, the journey can be isolating and emotionally overwhelming. Camp provides joyful, inclusive experiences that help break through that isolation by bringing children together with peers who understand their challenges and offering parents a supportive community that reminds them they’re not alone. By supporting Camp, we’re helping ensure that families have access to experiences that reduce stress, strengthen resilience, and create moments of happiness during incredibly difficult times. It’s a meaningful way for us to strengthen communities and make a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most.”

CVS has not only offered significant financial support, but its employees have also provided hands-on and heartfelt volunteerism through multiple Helping Hands Work Days at Camp, preparing the Connecticut facility to welcome campers and families. Additionally, CVS colleagues recently had the opportunity to support campers by writing cards with uplifting messages that were accompanied by “warm fuzzies” they crafted from colorful yarn and googly eyes – handmade creations that provide a simple way of saying “I see you”.

“CVS have been stalwart friends to Camp, ensuring our children and families find joy and hope through impactful programs,” said Andrea Keefe, director of corporate and foundation relations at Hole in the Wall. “It is incredibly powerful to have partners who share our values and commitment to building community and resilience, which allows our families to remember that they are so much more than a diagnosis.”

All of us here at Hole in the Wall are grateful to CVS, and all of our corporate partners, who help bring our Founder’s dream of “a different kind of healing” to those we are so privileged to serve. If you’d like to learn more about becoming a corporate partner, please contact Andrea at andrea.keefe@holeinthewallgang.org or visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/corpgiving.



LEAVE A LEGACY WORTH CELEBRATING



When you pledge a gift to Camp in your estate plan, your commitment helps share our founder Paul Newman’s dream of “a different kind of healing” with the next generation of children facing serious illnesses. The Founder’s Society recognizes our friends who have included Hole in the Wall in their estate plans. Join this celebrated group of legacy-makers by adding Camp as a beneficiary designee without needing to modify your will or trust. Common assets to add a nonprofit as a designee include: retirement accounts like IRAs or 401(k)s, life insurance policies, bank and brokerage accounts, or donor-advised funds. For more information, contact Deb Fraser at deborah.fraser@holeinthewallgang.org



Or scan the QR code to learn more



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The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp

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SAVE THE DATE



Join us for one of our signature events this fall and help bring “a different kind of healing” to the children and families Camp serves. To learn more, visit www.holeinthewallgang.org/benefitevents or email Director of Special Events Jennifer Weeks at jennifer.weeks@holeinthewallgang.org.



BIG APPLE BASH November 7, 2026

An unforgettable evening awaits at the iconic Tavern on the Green nestled inside Central Park, as the Big Apple Bash celebrates 35 years of gathering longtime and new Camp friends in Manhattan for this family-friendly celebration! Packed with a “hole” lot of fun for supporters of all ages, the Bash features themed rooms, crafts, costume characters, face painting, games, a DJ, dancing and more! Classic cocktails, custom mocktails, festive food carts, plus dinner and dessert buffets round out a night exuding the joy and magic of Camp.



BACK TO THE FUTURE; HONORING YESTERDAY,CELEBRATING TOMORROW September 19, 2026

The annual Fandango Benefit Gala tradition our Founder Paul Newman began to support Camp programs has evolved over time, but the touchstone and culmination of the festivities remains – a variety show with campers performing musical numbers, families sharing inspirational stories and celebrity friends joining them center stage. Our Fandango show once again returns to Hole in the Wall’s Theater in Ashford, Conn., with a simulcast stream available in our Rec Center. Guests will enjoy an afternoon and evening filled with cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, food trucks, interactive culinary stations, spirited silent and live auctions, music...and more!



LOOK INSIDE

to read a message from
Camp's new CEO



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