



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CAMP PROGRAM

A Healthy Dose of Fun... It's Also Good Medicine!



The camp experience helps children and adolescents thrive because it offers them a chance to see what the world might be like if a diagnosis didn't control their every move and hospital rooms didn't seem like second homes.

Challenges: Life impacting conditions can cast a very long shadow across the lives of children often robbing them of the everyday experiences necessary for healthy growth and personal development. Because of the medical limitations and boundaries they face, these children typically prosper from opportunities that enable them to safely reach beyond their conditions and explore their true capabilities. The adventures and stimulation of camp life, provided in a medically-supervised surrounding, offers kids just that... an environment filled with new and invigorating possibilities!

More than just a place to have fun and "be a kid," overnight and day camps for medically fragile boys and girls are purposely designed to foster independence and self-sufficiency while building new relationships with peers who share common health challenges. Additionally, while away from home, campers learn how to manage their conditions thereby developing a sense of self-confidence and resilience which is particularly important as they transition into adulthood. Camp can also connect parents and siblings with other families who have a child suffering from a serious health condition.

As part of its robust portfolio of pediatric outreach services, Children's Hospital of Greenville Health System (GHS) offers camp programming to children and adolescents with serious illnesses or disabilities. It is challenged, however, to further broaden these efforts so that all young people, regardless of their medical diagnosis, can enjoy this unique experience and build happy memories to help them through the rough times ahead.

Possibilities: Children’s hospitals, by virtue of their expertise, the timing of their interventions early in life, and the reliability of their brand, can potentially impact the health of entire generations. To improve the quality and delivery of care, however, these institutions are continually looking to extend their focus and find new ways to engage patients and families in their journeys toward wellness. GHS’ Children’s Hospital is no exception. It too is actively pursuing the development of additional services that enable kids to live fuller and more active lives. As a promising and tested method for promoting good physical, mental and social health, GHS is asking for support to enhance its existing camping programs.

Short-Term Initiatives

Strengthen Existing Camp Programs: GHS is currently seeking support of existing camp programs as well as money to create new camping opportunities that meet the evolving needs of pediatric patients, regardless of their medical diagnosis.

Family Weekends: To help children, parents and siblings better cope with the day-to-day challenges they face in dealing with serious illness, GHS would like to launch a series of retreat weekends focused on bringing the entire family together for a fun-filled, shared “getaway.”

Training and Volunteer Opportunities: New opportunities for medical school students to train at illness-specific camps and for MedEx Academy members to volunteer are also being explored.

Philanthropy and Partnerships...At the Heart of Good Health

“On the surface, a week at summer camp may not seem significant. However, the self-management skills taught by a caring and professional staff gives children with diabetes the chance of a lifetime to learn how to become independent and confident individuals.” Dr. Bryce Nelson, medical director, Division of Pediatric Endocrinology, GHS Children’s Hospital

Needs: While the demand for camp programs serving youngsters with special needs continues to grow, expansion has had its challenges. For example, due to shifting funding priorities, the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association no longer provide direct financial backing for camping programs. Fortunately, however, private philanthropy and community partnerships have taken up the camping cause and together have built a solid foundation to ensure its future success. A strong culture of good health and well-being for all children, however, does not happen by chance. GHS, therefore, is enlisting the support of local sponsors to invest in its camping initiatives and become the stewards that safeguard its continuing viability.

Source: American Camp Association (January 2016). How Special Needs Camping Has Impacted the Camp Experience by Vance Gilmore @ www.acacamps.org/resource-library/camping-magazine/how-special-needs-camping-has-impacted-camp-experience



Empowering Sick Kids... To Live Fuller Lives

A child's capacities for resilience - the ability to "bend, but not break" or even to grow in the face of adversity - are critical for positive growth and development. Source: Masten & Gerwitz (2006). The Importance of Early Childhood. @ www.victoryjunction.org

Camper Impacts and Benefits: Over the last several years, the Yale Child Study Center has partnered with SeriousFun Children's Network™ to assess the long term impacts of the residential camp experience on those who attend. Results from 2012-2014 surveys revealed that after participating in a SeriousFun camp, parents and caregivers reported changes in a number of positive attributes in their children, including confidence, independence, self-esteem, and increased interest in social activities. The 2015 surveys further supported these findings from parents as follows: 66% thought their child demonstrated an increased interest in social activities after camp ended, 79% believed their child seemed more confident, 77% reported their child demonstrated a stronger sense of self-esteem, and 64% indicated their child felt less isolated. Source: SeriousFun Children's Network (2014-15). Yale Child Study Center Report @ www.seriousfunnetwork.org/document.doc?id=845



Philanthropy...Makes Dreams Come True

As a recently designated academic health center, with an affiliated community-based medical school and premiere Children's Hospital, GHS is well positioned to establish a comprehensive set of recreation-based activities that offers a different kind of healing to very ill children as well as to families who have lost a child. While the premise of camp is pure fun, the purpose behind it is so much more. While honoring its commitment to provide unrivaled health care close to home, GHS also wants to provide pediatric patients with a place where they are not defined by illness and where the word "yes" is heard more frequently than the customary "no" or "be careful." This place is called camp and it's where kids can have the "best time of their lives!"

Giving Opportunities

Strengthen Existing Camp Programs

Family Weekends

Training and Volunteer Activities

To help shape the future of pediatric care programs in the Upstate, please contact:

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