

“Thank You Everyone Who Made This Possible”



August 2010

"My husband and I are facing a very difficult decision regarding the treatment of our 6 year old son. He is currently in between chemotherapy treatments for Ewings sarcoma in the soft tissue above his eye and we must decide whether to take his eye in hopes of saving his life.

This family retreat has given my husband and I time to dedicate all of our energy to playing and laughing as a family and time to step back from the daily chaos to talk and reflect on this decision.

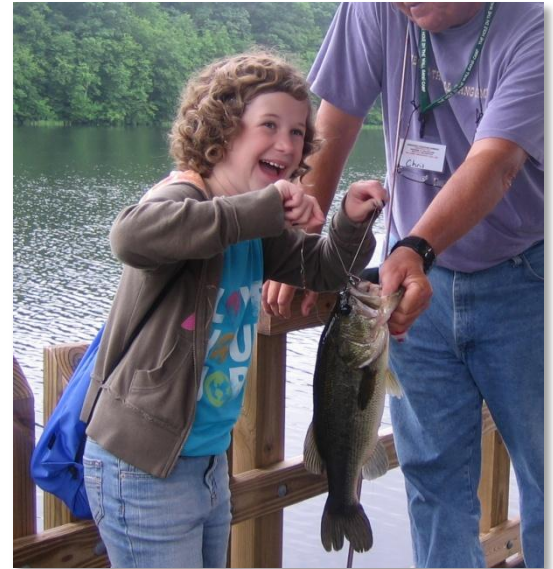
Thank You Everyone Who Made this Possible!"

April Shores
Camper Mom
Family Retreat



Camper Katie's Journey with Cancer

"Hello, my name is Katie. I am 11 years old and I am a cancer survivor. I live in Mesa, Arizona. I have a mom and a dad, 2 brothers and one sister. My story began on November 19, 2007 when I was diagnosed with stage 4 Wilms Tumor. Wilms is a type of kidney cancer. The reason why it was stage 4 is because when they found the cancer it had spread to my lungs. Normally, you would have surgery right away to remove the tumor, but my tumor had grown into my renal vein which is the main vein to the heart. I needed to start chemo right away to shrink my tumor. I received my first dose on Thanksgiving Day. How's that for a memory?



When I was first diagnosed I was extremely sick. I spent many days in Banner Children's Hospital. When I had to stay in the hospital it was a very difficult time on my family. My mom stayed with me every day and every night. My dad not only visited me every day but had to take care of everyone and everything at home as well.

This is when I started noticing that my faith was growing more and more. I believe that God has helped us through this difficult time. On January 7, 2008 I was able to have my surgery to remove the tumor and my left kidney. I continued with chemotherapy and did 8 days of radiation on my lungs and abdomen. Around this time, I lost the rest of my hair. Losing my hair was a very difficult part of my cancer journey. Cancer can be like an obstacle course, sometimes it is very challenging, but other times it can be very rewarding. For instance, thanks to the generous sponsors like yourselves, this past summer I attended Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Gang Camp with Camp Soaring Eagle. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Everyone made me feel so comfortable and for the first time in a long time, I didn't feel different and was able to be completely myself.

Thank you for supporting Camp Soaring Eagle
and giving me this opportunity I will never forget.

Katie
Camper

“Camp Experience: Better than I could have ever dreamed”

July 6, 2010

Dear Camp Soaring Eagle,

I just wanted to include a short note to expand a little bit on my feelings about Camp Soaring Eagle above and beyond the survey you sent me.



My daughter, Halle, was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma stage IV on April 11, 2008. She was stage IV because the disease had spread outside of her lymph system and into her lungs. She was 11 years old and in 5th grade at the time. She needed 8 chemo treatments and was able to go back to school about half of the time for 6th grade. She was bald, but didn't seem too bothered by that. However, after chemo was all over and her hair was growing back it unexpectedly fell out again. This time the lack of hair was a problem. I think it was the unexpected nature of the 2nd time. She had 4 different wigs, red, brown, blond and a mixture of red and blond. She could be a different girl every day! Treatment was tough in the typical ways. She had weight loss, bone pain, nausea and all of those things, but the toughest was when the chemo started eating a hole in her colon. She was in the hospital for 15 days and was unable to eat for 11 of those days. She couldn't even have ice chips, it was torture for her. She was receiving IV nutrition, but she was really hungry and weak. She also

developed pneumonia during this stay. Once they told her she could eat again she had a hard time getting anything down for days. We made it through and she did get to say she got to see her colon on TV! How many 6th graders could say that!

When people ask me how is Halle doing now after she is done with her cancer treatment, it is hard for me to answer that question. Physically, I think you would agree she is great. An unknowing observer would never guess that she had been so desperately sick just a short time ago. She looks great! But the answer to that question is really that emotionally she really isn't doing as well as I'd hoped. She is still very anxious. I know that she carries around some very deep, emotional worries. She feels “different” than the other kids at school. She feels that she doesn't fit in. She withdraws into video games and books and computer time. She is more comfortable being alone than spending time with friends. These are the things that I worry about most.

Her experience at camp was better than I could have ever dreamed. She was so ecstatic when she got home. I don't believe that she has ever had a better experience in her life. She was singing and laughing and hugging the other kids when they got off the bus. She has kept in touch with them by phone in the weeks since she got back. You could have knocked me over with a feather when I heard that she had sung by herself at the talent show. I think that you all met a completely different Halley than the one that I've been living with for the past couple of years.

Halle has explained to me that it is easier for her to talk to kids at camp. They “get” her. They don't think she is weird. She can be herself with them. They know what it is like to go through a life threatening illness. It is a comfort level that I understand because I feel the same way with other cancer moms. I wish that Halle could have the same kind of confidence in her regular life and we are really working towards that. My hope is that since she felt what it is like to be able to come out of her shell and be herself with kids at camp that she will be able to bring that unselfconscious, bubbly girl back home with her.

My purpose of telling you this is to let you know in my own words how important the work that you do is. It is so meaningful to these kids. It is more important than just doing some fun activities for a week. It can actually change their lives and their perspective on life itself. A lot of times with these kids they have to have a bald head to still be battling the effects of cancer. Thank you so much for dedicating your life to working on something so important!

All my love and thanks,

Amy Dirks
Camper Mom



Family Retreat

Letter from Linda Johansen-James
Vice Chair, Camp Soaring Eagle Foundation



Friday, August 6, 2010

Good Morning Everyone,

I wanted to send you my thoughts about my experience this week at our Family Retreat at the Briar Patch Inn in Sedona. We hosted 8 children with cancer and their families. The children ranged in age from 5 months to 10 years old. Most of the children are still going through some pretty tough treatments to fight their battle with cancer.



When Max and I arrived the children were involved lots of activities. Some were in arts and crafts making airplanes and some were outside playing kick ball. They were having a ball and there were lots of smiles and laughing all around. The Moms and Dads and siblings were playing right along with them.

A mother came right up to me and gave me a big hug and thanked me for allowing her and her family to attend such an incredible camp. She told me that her son was diagnosed with cancer at the tender age of 3. He had Ewing's sarcoma in the soft tissue above his eye. He had gone through some pretty tough treatments for over 2 years and last year was found to be cancer free. Then, this year in March, it came back. He is now going through Radiation and Chemotherapy to stop the spread of the cancer. He is her only son and it looks like she may have to make a really tough decision. That decision will be whether or not to take out his eye in order, to perhaps, save

his life. I don't know about you, but I can't imagine having to make that decision about my child. She told me that this week has been the best week in a long time. The stress and pressure of having to deal with a sick child is overwhelming. They spend most of the time in the hospital and when they are not in the hospital, she is dealing with Spencer being extremely sick. April told me that this week has given she and her husband, Mike, a chance to just have fun with Spencer and forget for a moment about the illness he has. She then told me something that honestly forced me to fight back the tears while she was speaking, she said, "How do I tell my son that he may lose his eye?" At that point, Spencer ran up and told me what a great time he had this week with everyone and gave me a hug. He then told his Mom that he was very tired and he looked really pale and that he needed to rest. April told me that he is like that most of the time. He then noticed my cowboy boots and so did April. He shared with me a story that I would like to share with you. Last year, the family went to Houston for one of his treatments and they found a card that had cowboy boots on them and it said, "Let's kick cancers ass". April told me that they say that all the time and it is the only time that Spencer can use that bad word. I told Spencer that every time now when I put on my boots, I am going to think of him and repeat that saying. How about if we all do it?

We had a great dinner that evening and one of the Dads who was there told Max that this week is the best he and his family have eaten in a very long time and he thanked Max profusely. I assume that most of the money these families have is going to help their sick child and there is not a lot left over for what we take for granted, like food. You could tell that these families have really bonded together during this week and will stay friends forever.

We then had a campfire and gave the families an opportunity to share their thoughts with the group. Miguel, one of the Dads got up with his two year old daughter, Zinnia, who has cancer. He told the story of when he and his family were getting ready for vacation and Zinnia got sick. They found out that she has Leukemia. He was crying so hard and stated that since May, they have spent most of their time in the hospital. He said, "I cannot thank the staff



enough for what they have done for my family this week and allowing us to just have fun together." Now if that does not tug on your heart strings, I don't know what will.

Rob Olson, Owner of Briar Patch Inn was there as well and he stated this week was so moving for he and his family that he will be donating another week next year as well. WOW!!!! What an incredible man.

During the week, the children and their families painted a real Totem Pole, the *Camp Soaring Eagle Pole of Courage*. They put their handprints on it and drew things that related to their individual families. The pole is now permanently cemented in at Briar Patch and you could not find a dry eye in the house during that ceremony. The families stated when they continue to have rough patches, they will all gather at the Camp Soaring Eagle Pole of Courage, whether in person or in their dreams!!!! By the way, the log for the totem pole, Rob had cut down on his property for us. WOW.



We then had a sing along and the kids were playing instruments and boy was everyone having fun. Then, Juan brought all the kids up and had them hold hands and make a circle and then the parents and the rest of us formed a circle around them. Juan then stated that this was the circle of love and all the love was to protect the children. What an emotional ceremony. At the end of the evening, all the parents were so appreciative of having this week to spend with their families that they could not thank us enough.

This experience for me was a very emotional one and made me go back to what my friend, Marlo Thomas always says, "Give thanks for the healthy children in your lives and give to those that are not".

You should all be really proud of the Camp's team. I have to tell you that they were incredible. The families could not say enough about their passion and dedication and how much they enjoyed themselves. The team worked really hard this week but I have to say, they loved it. It wasn't work for them. It was about helping the children. You will not find a more dedicated team to these children and they did an A+ job. We should all be thankful for them and help them anyway we can. What do I mean by this? We have to dedicate ourselves to raising money to support our vision. There is nothing more important than sending as many kids as we can to camp. Imagine all the lives we can and will change. I don't know about you, but that is enough motivation for me.

I also want to suggest that as many of you as possible attend these camping sessions. We have many more weekend sessions coming up and hope all of you will come and experience what I did.

Now, onward to all the many events we have coming up and it is up to use to help raise as much money as we can to make these events successful.

Thank you for sharing our vision. *"If you can change the live of child, you can change the world"*.

Linda Johansen-James

Vice Chair

Camp Soaring Eagle Foundation

