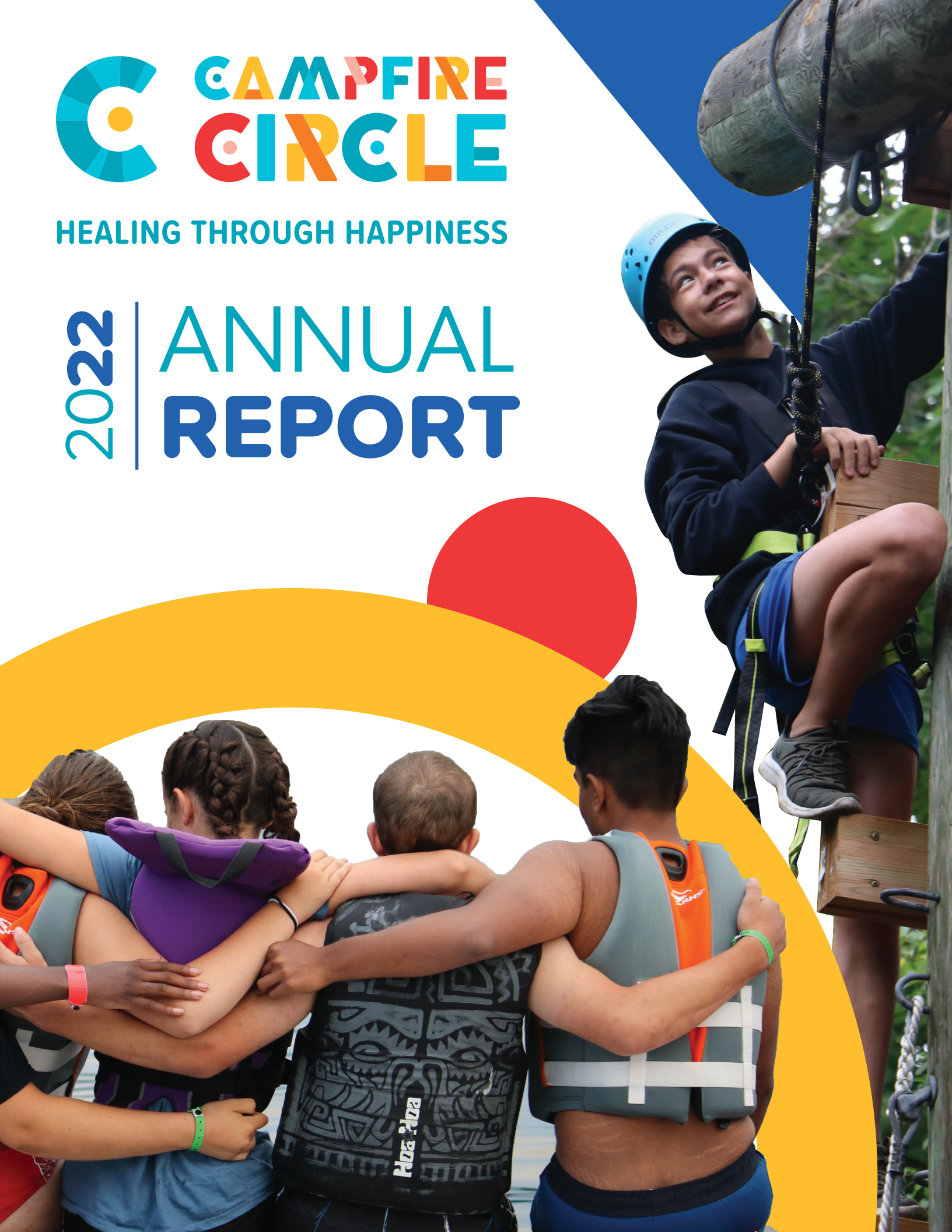


CAMPFIRE  
CIRCLE

HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS

2022

ANNUAL  
REPORT



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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

This year was all about building back community, and returning 2,000 campers and their families to in-person programs! Your support has been critical, enabling us to be there to help families in crisis, when they needed it most.

At the start of the year, we officially rebranded as Campfire Circle. Our new name places kids and families at the heart of what we do, and recognizes the circle of care that surrounds them, including you!

Campfire Circle is passionate about building a world where children thrive and families heal. Through our in-hospital, community and overnight camp programs, Campfire Circle fosters resilience, well-being and lifelong connections for kids with cancer or serious illness and their families.

Now, more than ever, kids need hope, friendships, and community. Campfire Circle fills the gaps, meeting children where they're at. Our healthcare partners, and the families we serve, all tell us that our programs are an integral part of the healing journey. And so are you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex".

Alex Robertson  
CEO, Campfire Circle

# PROGRAMS AT OVERNIGHT CAMP

After a long hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, elated campers and their families reunited in person at our overnight camp programs. More than 1,000 campers attended our two year-round overnight camp sites—Muskoka and Rainbow Lake—where kids and families took part in traditional kids-only camp as well as family camp.

Our Muskoka location is the only camp in Canada equipped to offer IV chemotherapy and blood transfusions on-site. This allows children undergoing active treatment to experience camp. We also provide camp experiences for the whole family. In 2022, we doubled the specialty sessions for bereaved siblings, and introduced a sibling-only session for the first time.

Family camp returned to Rainbow Lake with half of families having a child under the age of seven, on active treatment. Here, they accessed emotional support and connected with others who shared a similar journey.

## SIBLINGS-ONLY OVERNIGHT CAMP

A childhood cancer diagnosis impacts the whole family, and Campfire Circle supports every member—parents and siblings included. “Siblings go through a difficult time, but in a different way,” says camper mom Heather.

This summer, Heather’s son Liam attended Campfire Circle’s first siblings-only overnight camp. “He’s 16 years old now,” says Heather. “Liam couldn’t stop talking about his experience. He’s processing things that happened 10 years ago. Because he’s around other siblings, he felt comfortable enough to say things that other kids wouldn’t have been able to understand.”

Even though summer adventures have ended, Liam is still in daily contact with some of his cabin mates, and they caught up in person again before the year ended.

“So much of our journey includes Campfire Circle,” says Heather. “Liam is looking forward to giving back. He wants to be a counsellor and become a lifeguard. In fact, we all want to volunteer once the kids are past the age of going to camp.”

**50%**  
**of children**

at family camp were  
on active cancer  
treatment



**160+**  
**families**

rediscovered sparks  
of light and laughter  
at Rainbow Lake

**230+**  
**siblings**

supported each  
other in specialty  
sessions, designed  
just for them

“

We had the best time at Rainbow Lake. Last year Alyssa wouldn't leave our side...this year she's like, 'Bye mom, I'm hanging out with my friends!' It's so healing to be surrounded by people who understand what we have lived!

—Camper Mom



# PROGRAMS IN THE HOSPITAL

In 2022, Campfire Circle delivered more than 3,000 camp-inspired experiences at bedside across all four children's paediatric hospitals. When feelings of isolation were reported at an all-time high, our programs helped foster friendship and connection during these challenging moments.

Program Specialists met campers at their bedside, introducing them to the magic of camp. By tailoring experiences to each camper's interests, they brought much-needed joy during a hard time.

From October to December of 2022, across Ontario, hospitals were grappling with the triple threat of influenza, COVID-19 and the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). In response, we tailored our Giving Tuesday campaign to focus on our in-hospital bedside programs—with every donation made triple matched by the Ever Hopeful Fund up to \$100,000.

As paediatric occupancy across the GTA jumped from 85 per cent in mid-October to over 120 per cent in mid-November, our programs played a critical role in supporting kids and families in hospital, as they faced longer wait times and reported greater feelings of isolation.

“

**Being a kid with cancer is incredibly stressful. That's why the programs Campfire Circle offers for patients while they are in-hospital is a form of treatment that only camp can provide. Camp helps with emotional well-being, increased resilience, and building caring connections.”**

**—Dr. Sarah Alexander**

*Chair, Campfire Circle Medical Advisory Committee & Medical Director; Clinical Director, Paediatric Haematology/Oncology, SickKids*



# TAYLOR'S STORY

"Taylor\* has been in hospital for 87 days. When you're six years old, 87 days feels like a lifetime," says Samantha Rennie, In-Hospital Program Specialist, Campfire Circle. "In consultation with her medical team, they told me that it's critically important for her to get moving immediately and keep moving as much as she can, all in the hope that she can walk out of here sometime before the end of the year."

"I knew exactly what to do. We play 'statues,' where we go walking in the halls and we freeze when anyone sees us. Our nurses and doctors got into it right away, and Taylor bursts with giggles when everyone plays along. After a while, she gets really tired and we need to head back to her room, but I can see her progress already, and she's just delighted by the game! Luckily, when we get back to her room she's always up for playing with slime. With the support of donors, I've made huge batches of winter slime—it's light blue with glitter and snowflakes. Taylor always wants to add googly eyeballs and I'm here for that."

\*Taylor's name has been changed for privacy issues

# IMPACT SURVEY

In the fall, Campfire Circle held a weekend gathering at our Muskoka site where we welcomed adolescents and young adults (AYA) for a weekend filled with adventure and fun, and opportunities to learn and connect with other adults who had childhood cancer. Many of the participants were camper alumni — former young campers who were able to re-engage with fun camp activities — reconnect with peers and build new friendships. It also created the opportunity to survey alumni and young adult participants to learn more about how Campfire Circle has had a lasting impact on their lives.

“Whether we’re providing fun activities for kids in the hospital or welcoming them to an exciting adventure at our medically-supported overnight camps, it’s easy to see the immediate benefits of Campfire Circle’s programs on children with cancer or serious illness,” says Lauren Chisholm, Director, Program Development & Strategy. “But with this AYA survey, we wanted to gather more information about how our programming contributes to long-term benefits, helping these children to build friendships and social skills, develop self-confidence and resiliency, and improve their overall well-being.”

The survey results demonstrate that Campfire Circle programs have a lasting impact on our participants, promoting belonging and connectedness, perseverance and resilience, and hope and optimism for the future.





**SOME KEY  
FINDINGS  
INCLUDE:**

**93%** of alumni indicated that their camp experience made it easier for them to cope with their illness and treatment

**98%** believe that attending camp after their diagnosis made them feel less isolated as a child with cancer

**90%** indicated that attending camp improved their ability to collaborate with others

**98%** affirmed that their camp experience had a positive impact on their mental health and well-being

**85%** indicated that attending camp after their diagnosis helped them feel more resilient and prepared for their future

**90%** said that their exposure to Campfire Circle programs gave them more confidence that has extended into their adulthood

The survey also included two open-ended questions that invited alumni to share how their camp experience has equipped them to handle challenging situations and influenced their lives on a day-to-day basis.

## HERE ARE A FEW QUOTES:



**I have learned so much from camp... compassion, leadership, presentation skills, and communication skills. At camp, I have made long-lasting relationships that stand on deeper connections than the relationships you would make in the outside world. I am a happier and better person because I was fortunate to go to Campfire Circle during a hard time in my life.**



**Camp was an important builder of skills, interests, and relationships that I didn't end up having through the regular school year when I was a child. In retrospect, I found that my ability to make friends and communicate was hampered by my time at the hospital during my early childhood, but camp was a place where I made friends; friends I have to this day.**



**Camp has made me into a confident and resilient person today. Learning that it was okay to be silly, vulnerable and being brave through my experiences at camp really prepared me for everyday life now years after my diagnosis.**

“

Camp has shaped me into who I am today. I wouldn't be who I am without it. I think that the most impactful part of camp was the volunteers who always showed kindness and compassion in every situation... I believe that now in my adult life, I am more kind, caring, compassionate, hardworking, selfless and flexible because of the countless examples of these traits that I saw and experienced firsthand at camp.

“

It's nice knowing that camp is there to help us cope with our childhood trauma. My experiences helped me learn a lot about how to cope with mental health issues.

“

Being able to relate and socialize with other survivors made me far more confident in myself and how I approached future events. It made me realize that I wasn't alone and was allowed to move on with my life without being just the kid who had cancer.

“

I definitely feel that the support of camp, and ultimately other survivors, has made me feel less scared and alone facing my future. Dealing with the reality of my health and that I have a whole life ahead of me is really weird, and something that doesn't come naturally to childhood cancer survivors, so being able to connect with others in the same boat is very reassuring and therapeutic.

# IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

OVERNIGHT  
CAMP:

**7,246 PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCES**

ALUMNI  
AND YOUNG  
ADULT  
PROGRAMS:

**200 PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCES**

COMMUNITY  
PROGRAM:

**2,103 PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCES**

1 PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCE =

1 IN-HOSPITAL  
BEDSIDE VISIT OR  
GROUP ACTIVITY

1 COMMUNITY  
ACTIVITY OR  
EVENT (INCL  
VIRTUAL)

1 DAY OF  
OVERNIGHT  
CAMP

2022 TOTAL:

**17,405 PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCES**

IN-HOSPITAL  
PROGRAM:

**7,865  
PROGRAM  
EXPERIENCES**

# BURNING BRIGHT ACROSS ONTARIO

Families from eastern and southwestern Ontario dipped their toes into the waters of camp by registering for community-based programs. From the Amazing Race and garden tea parties, to family camping trips, and virtual programs, our circle of friends grew even bigger this year.

Sam, age five, and her family attended their first in-person program at our Ottawa family camping trip. Diagnosed during the pandemic, Sam had missed out on many childhood experiences. This all changed during a weekend camping trip in July. It was a weekend of firsts: It was her first S'more, first time sleeping in a tent, and it was her first time swimming with her family.

These "firsts" contribute to healthy childhood development, something kids living in hospital often miss out on. Your support is helping give families back these precious childhood experiences.

“

**We could never have gone camping without you. We wouldn't have had a clue where to start. You've given us so much confidence that we will be able to do this as a family. We are even making plans to camp with one of the other families we met this weekend.**

**—Camper Parent**



**Gifts of Magic  
raised \$371,799**

**for Campfire Circle, which  
will help fund nearly  
3,800 in-hospital program  
experiences.**



# GIFTS OF MAGIC

In December, through direct mail, digital marketing and social media, Campfire Circle launched our “Gifts of Magic” campaign, which continued to support our critical in-hospital programs at SickKids, McMaster Children’s Hospital and The Children’s Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre. Donations were double matched by the Ever Hopeful Fund to a maximum of \$130,000.

## LCBO RECOGNIZES CAMPFIRE CIRCLE AS A CHARITY BENEFICIARY

LCBO has been supporting Campfire Circle for decades, and last year they increased their impact. Over the 2022 holiday season, Campfire Circle was featured as a LCBO charity beneficiary alongside Ontario’s four children’s hospitals: Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Foundation, Children’s Health Foundation, McMaster Children’s Hospital Foundation and SickKids Foundation.

“As we work alongside our paediatric health-care partners, Campfire Circle plays a key role in bringing joy and laughter to kids affected by cancer or serious illness, providing playful and interactive activities right at their bedside in hospital. Our camp-inspired programs help kids to just be kids, improving their social, mental, and emotional well-being,” said Alex Robertson in a statement announcing the inaugural partnership.

To support the campaign, Campfire Circle staff visited a number of LCBO retail stores across Ontario, ensuring that their staff were trained on who we are and how we provide critical programming in hospitals.



**SickKids**

**CHEO**



**Alexandra's life changed dramatically the summer she finished her first year of university...**

# ALEXANDRA'S STORY

She had been in pain for months and after a referral to an oral surgeon, Alexandra was diagnosed with stage 4 Burkitt lymphoma, a cancer that starts in immune cells called B-cells. Recognized as extremely fast-growing, tumours can double in size every 18 to 24 hours.

Since she was 18 years old at the time, Alexandra was admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH). She was at PMH for two weeks and started intensive chemotherapy immediately.

What came next was a cancer journey experience that Alexandra found intensely isolating. "I lost 90 per cent of my friends when I got diagnosed," says Alexandra. "People my age don't know how to respond. I got texts with emojis, and that's it."

The experience of being in the hospital was so isolating that she begged her parents to stop chemo. "I remember sitting at our kitchen table with them and begging them to let me stop. To let me die."

Meanwhile, a social worker approached Alexandra about attending overnight camp at Campfire Circle. She was so excited to attend and was looking forward to leaving on July 6. But after a series of complications including sepsis and kidney failure, her team of specialists felt Alexandra was too medically unstable to participate. Alexandra was incredibly disappointed -- her mental health was deteriorating.

Another opportunity to attend Campfire Circle's 7Scape – a program for teens – opened up in August. Despite long days in the hospital with blood transfusions and treatment, Alexandra was determined to get to camp.

Once she arrived, she immediately felt more herself. "Until I showed up at 7Scape, I was completely isolated," says Alexandra. "I finally met people who understood me."

After her week at camp, a new Alexandra appeared. She came back motivated and with a will to move forward. She was also able to go on a canoe trip in Algonquin with a PICC line in her arm, and experience a special birthday during a fall Weekend at Camp.

Now 22 years old, Alexandra is a thriving adult. Looking back at that year, the only thing that kept her going was Campfire Circle.

"I wish more people knew about Campfire Circle. I was lucky to go to camp and make friends. Camp gave me the support system to help me with this diagnosis and treatment because no one else gets it. Campfire Circle was the only place that filled this gap for me."



# SIGNATURE EVENTS

## SPORTING LIFE 10K



On Mother's Day, we brought back the annual Sporting Life 10K in person, and welcomed more than 16,000 participants. As one of Canada's largest 10K events, we once again took to iconic Yonge Street on a sunny Sunday morning and across Canada throughout the month of May for the Virtual 10K.

With safety precautions top of mind, Campfire Circle staff were reunited with campers and their families, volunteers and long-standing Sporting Life 10K supporters.

### SPORTING LIFE 10K BY THE NUMBERS

**\$1.65M raised**  
for Campfire Circle!

**56 Corporate Teams**

**57 Camper Family Teams**

**11,500+ participants**

**\$1.65M =**

**3,300 experiences**

# R2//NYC

On Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 38 cyclists departed Toronto and embarked on a five-day, 850km journey through Ontario, New York State and Pennsylvania before arriving in New York City on September 18. In addition to this amazing endurance feat, the R2//NYC riders raised over \$860,000 to support Campfire Circle's year-round programming in children's hospitals, community programs and overnight camps.

"We're so grateful for the support of these cyclists who are helping to bring joy and laughter to kids who need it most," says Alex Robertson, CEO, Campfire Circle. "Right now, kids and families affected by childhood cancer need the joy and adventure of our camp-inspired programs more than ever. Thank you, R2//NYC riders and support crew, for giving these children the gift of fun, friendship, and community!"

The riders come from various communities across Ontario, including Toronto, Collingwood, Hamilton, London, and Milton, all united in their goal to give kids with cancer the chance to just be kids.



# DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION

# DEI

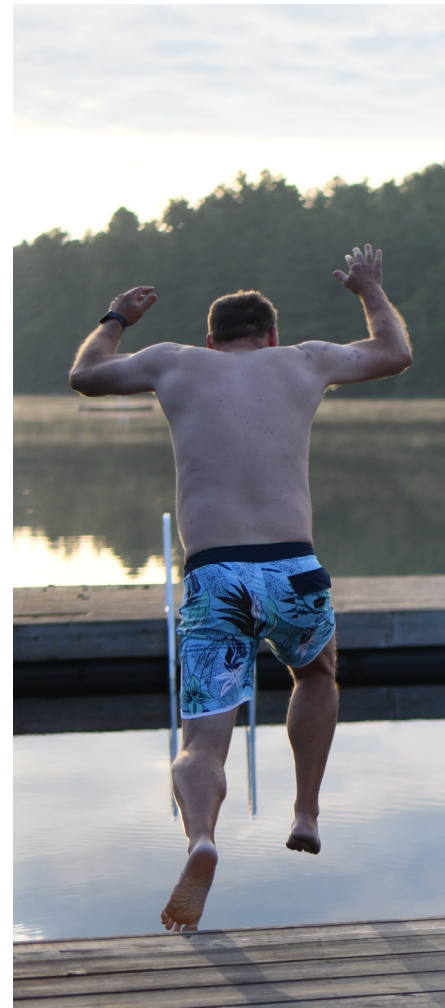
To support Campfire Circle's efforts in creating an inclusive and equitable workplace, we implemented programs to improve our recruitment and training practices and increase meaningful employment opportunities for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities.

With the support of donors, funding was provided to boost recruitment efforts designed to attract and support a more diverse team. We removed job requirements that could be seen as potential barriers, and actively promoted special supports designed to engage more people new to camp to apply for roles with us. Our recruitment efforts also removed barriers such as requiring previous camp experience, instead looking for transferable skills. Virtual interviews were conducted to reach a larger pool of candidates and financial assistance was offered for training for hard skills, certifications, transportation, and equipment.

We partnered with non-profit organizations in the community to open doors to reach a wider pool of candidates. This included collaborations with the Black North Initiative, Pathways to Education, and WoodGreen Employment Services. Funding also helped us promote these opportunities widely from social media, email promotions, radio ads, and virtual job fairs.

This critical support from donors allowed us to hire 22 incredible BIPOC summer staff, with 13 of these team members working with us post-summer to support year-round programs. This positively impacted our campers, 30 percent of whom identified as BIPOC.

Funds were also used to equip our staff and volunteer community with essential training and development on: mental health, consent culture, Anti-Black racism, gender identity and expression, children's grief, diversity, equity and inclusion in a camp setting, introduction to autism, and behaviour management.







# PATH2PLAY

## ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS AT MUSKOKA

This summer, nearly one third of our campers identified as living with a disability. With the help of generous donors like you, we transformed Campfire Circle Muskoka into a place where everyone can thrive by eliminating physical barriers to participation. With almost 1.25 kilometres of new, accessible routes that seamlessly connect all activities, you have helped us dramatically improve accessibility so that campers can now navigate with agency and independence.

Our redeveloped waterfront is where campers can enjoy the fun and sun independently and safely with two acres of accessible outdoor features. The new barrier-free access allows campers with mobility devices to go swimming, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and experience archery, and fishing.

Our new campitheatre accommodates 50 per cent more campers, and kids living with mobility devices are fully integrated into every special moment around the campfire.

“

**This year was the best year, we finally got to come back after what feels like an eternity being away. The biggest change I've seen has to be the campitheatre, it is huge and has space for everyone — including me. Before, I would have to sit at the very top in my wheelchair, looking down at my cabin sitting together. It's not that I didn't enjoy myself, my counsellors always tried to make the best of it for me. This year I was able to follow them down, right to the front and sit alongside them. It might seem like a little thing to most, but to me it made me feel included.”**

– Camper



# FINANCIAL UPDATE

In 2022, Campfire Circle resumed our core in-person programming across all sites and relaunched many of our in-person fundraising events, such as the Sporting Life 10K, Bonfire Bash Gala and the R2//NYC. While it was exciting to see these programs and events return, we intentionally kept them to a smaller scale than capacity, recognizing that our post-pandemic recovery would take time before we can best support the expected numbers of volunteers and program participants. As such, strategic investments were made to ensure our programs would resume as soon as it was safe to do so, ahead of planned fundraising recovery, and positioned for further growth. This led to a planned deficit of \$2.6M, partially offset by funding reserves.



- Donations and fundraising 89%
- Investment, rental, and other 10%
- Government subsidies 1%



- Camp Programs 66%
- Fundraising 22%
- Administration, Rental & Other 12%

[2022 Financial Statements](#)

[Detailed Impact Report](#)

\* The financial information in this update is drawn from Campfire Circle Corporation's audited financial statements.



**Click here for a special message from our camper family!**

# THANK YOU!

Throughout the pandemic, we witnessed an outpouring of support from our community who rallied around us to ensure we could continue to serve thousands of kids and families affected by childhood cancer or serious illness.

We are grateful to our Board of Directors, our faithful donors and our trusted partners. Click on the links to learn more about their support.

**Thank you for being a part of our circle!**

**Our Donor Wall**

**Our Board**



Ontario Trillium Foundation



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