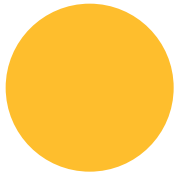




HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS

ANNUAL REPORT



2023



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

For a week each summer, I take a break from being the Chief Executive Officer to volunteer as a camp counsellor and be the Chief Excitement Officer. This year, I had the privilege of connecting with Noah. Noah has been using a wheelchair ever since he had cancer as a baby. This was his first time going to camp all by himself. While he was super excited, his parents understandably sent along a detailed list of instructions and medical notes.

From the moment Noah got off the wheelchair-accessible bus, he had the opportunity to engage with all of the camp adventures and activities. Noah tried everything—but he loved swimming the most. When it came to treetop trekking, Noah was like any other kid, making his way through the accessible adventure course.

These are the special moments that supporters like you make possible. You ensure kids—even the most medically complex—feel welcomed. This is why we continue to invest in innovative and impactful programs and are so grateful for our longstanding healthcare partners and the medical community who volunteer their time at camp.

In 2023, we celebrated 40 years of serving children with cancer and their families, but we know we can do more to improve the state of paediatric healthcare in Ontario. Campfire Circle has an ambitious goal to expand our reach and serve thousands more medically fragile children across Ontario.

We can't deliver this healing through happiness without you. There is more we can do together, and I am grateful you are part of our circle.

Sincerely,



Alex Robertson
CEO, Campfire Circle





WHY CAMPFIRE CIRCLE?

WE HAVE A TRUSTED TRACK RECORD

Since 1983, Campfire Circle has helped children with cancer or serious illness to build social and emotional skills, develop self-confidence and resiliency, and improve their overall well-being.

WE PROVIDE A CIRCLE OF CARE

In a burdened paediatric health care system, we partner with children's hospitals to provide kids with cancer or serious illness with the social and emotional development support they desperately need. With the support of generous donors like you, Campfire Circle meets children wherever they are in their medical journey, offering play-based programs in paediatric hospitals across Ontario, in local communities, and at our two medically supported overnight camps, at no cost to families.

WE OFFER WHAT NO ONE ELSE CAN

Our programs are accessible to kids on active treatment or requiring complex medical care. Campfire Circle's innovative programming established the international standards for medically supported camps—and paved the way for others around the world.

WE CARE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

A cancer or serious illness diagnosis impacts the well-being and mental health of the family unit. Campers, siblings, caregivers—the entire family can participate in a variety of unique programs close to home, online through virtual programs, or through our family camp experiences.

WE PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Campfire Circle fosters resilience, hope, and lifelong connections through intentional programming. Our evidence-based methods help to build skills and competencies—and the impact is measurable.

WHAT WE DO



IN-HOSPITAL PROGRAMS

Our Program Specialists provide thousands of daily one-on-one bedside, group, or in-clinic camp-inspired experiences for newly diagnosed families, kids on active treatment, or during palliative care. These play-based sessions bring normalcy and connection to kids and caregivers during their time in hospital. Our programs are offered at leading children's hospitals across Ontario, along with children's hospices and other satellite centres, all delivered at no cost to patients or hospital partners.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Campfire Circle offers year-round medically accessible programming for children, youth, and their families in their local communities. Available in the Greater Toronto Area, Hamilton, Ottawa, London, and Barrie, programs are inclusive of kids on active treatment, and provide programming for bereaved siblings and caregivers. Programs include: summer day camps, March Break camps, family weekend camping trips, and virtual programs for maximum accessibility.



OVERNIGHT PROGRAMS

We offer the benefits of camp combined with on-site medical care for kids with complex needs. Kids, teens, siblings, and caregivers can attend everything from family camp, to teen camps, to camper-only experiences. Our Muskoka site is the only camp in Canada equipped with IV chemotherapy and blood transfusions so kids can participate while undergoing active treatment. Our Rainbow Lake site hosts family camp so the whole family can benefit. Both sites host Weekends at Camp (WACs) all year round so campers and families can stay connected.

A TRUSTED PLAY PARTNER

Carter loves to see what's going on in The Cabin. Whenever he's at SickKids, for clinic or a check-up, he always comes by for a visit.

The Cabin is Campfire Circle's dedicated space at SickKids where kids of all ages can gather for themed group programming.

Carter's favourite things are making slime and coming in to see his friends. "I still have slime that we have taken home from the hospital," says Gianina, Carter's mom. "All he wants to do is put it on the walls!"

At five years old, Carter was diagnosed with leukemia, and met Campfire Circle at the hospital within the first weeks of treatment. "Carter fell in love with camp in the hospital," says Gianina. "It felt overwhelming. I'm a nurse, I've even worked in paediatric oncology before. But I never realized how much Campfire Circle is a lifeline for families—like having a family outside of our own."

As a trusted mental well-being and play partner, Campfire Circle creates hospital programming for haematology/oncology patients on the 8th floor and for outpatients in the clinic. Twice a year, Campfire Circle also hosts a hospital-wide camp week for all patients. For kids like Carter, these play-based programs bring a sense of normalcy, foster social connectedness, and promote overall well-being.

With the generous support of donors, this year, the Campfire Circle team expanded programming to the 6th floor, to include children with serious illnesses such as multi-organ transplants and medical specialties.

SickKids is the largest paediatric medical centre in Canada and has been in partnership with Campfire Circle for 30 years.



“

Carter knows he is different, with his chemo port and still wearing a mask. But with Campfire Circle, Carter feels like he belongs.”

—Gianina

RALLYING BEHIND CAMPFIRE CIRCLE FOR 25 YEARS!



The Brad Stevens Memorial Golf Tournament began in 1998 with a small but enthusiastic group of golfers, who wanted to do something to remember their friend Brad.

Organized by John, Brad's brother, the event grew from a small group to more than 140 golfers, uniting to raise funds for Campfire Circle.

"How can you not get excited about raising money for kids? It's always been about the kids. If we can send one child with cancer to camp for a day then the tournament has been a success," says John.

The event, complete with a golf tournament, BBQ dinner, and silent auction, has raised an incredible \$370,000 since its inception. With golfers from ages 12 up to 92, the idea behind this family event is to create memories.

"Campfire Circle to me is these incredible children who have the spirit I wish more people had because they are amazing," says John. "I love the confidence it gives kids and the opportunity to be 'normal.'"

We are so grateful to donors like John, and the participants in the Brad Stevens Memorial Golf Tournament, who are making a huge difference in the lives of kids with cancer or serious illness and their families.



HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS



TRENT UNIVERSITY STUDY HIGHLIGHTS PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF CAMP

In 2022, Campfire Circle partnered with researchers from Trent University to study the psychosocial outcomes of overnight camp for kids with cancer who often miss out on childhood experiences due to their diagnosis. The research team included

Sarah O'Connell, former camp volunteer and Master of Science student, led by Dr. Sarah West, Associate Dean of Science and Associate Professor of Kinesiology & Biology at Trent University.

“We predicted that attending a two-week oncology camp would be associated with higher levels of hope, resilience, and mental well-being, and lower levels of stress in kids who have or have had cancer,” says Dr. Sarah West

The study gathered data through validated surveys and saliva cortisol tests during one camp session. Surveys were taken on the first day of camp, the last full day of camp, and three months after camp.

It had exciting findings in four key areas of psychosocial indicators:

RESILIENCE

Children with cancer face a myriad of psychological, social, and physical challenges. Resilience, or the ability to adapt to significant adversity, is critical to a child's long-term outcome. Levels of resilience in children were high at camp, as evaluated by The Child and Youth Resilience Measure. The Trent team found a clinically significant change in resilience between when kids were at camp versus when they were back in their regular environments. **"These high levels of resilience while at camp are a really positive finding,"** says Dr. West.



HOPE

Hope plays an important role in healing and resilience. The Trent team found that children had statistically significant higher levels of hope at camp than at home, according to the Children's Hope Scale. During camp, kids are highly motivated to pursue their goals and figure out ways to achieve them. **"A lot of the time, cancer and cancer treatment disrupts children's progressions towards goals, and camp is a time for them to reset,"** says Dr. West.



SOCIAL SUPPORT

"A lot of childhood cancer patients report feeling socially isolated or lonely during treatment and often report having a hard time maintaining friendships during this time," says Dr. West. While at camp, children reported high levels of well-being and social support and these levels remained high even three months post camp. **"The fact that we are seeing relatively long-term high levels of social support at this time is really promising,"** says Dr. West.



STRESS

The research team measured cortisol levels (the stress hormone) in kids and found they had healthy, normal levels of stress while at camp, indicating that camp was not a stressful experience for campers.

"Overall, we concluded that the camp experience is associated with excellent psychosocial health in childhood cancer patients," says Dr. West. **"Camp is a positive and supportive environment for this patient population."**



This study will be used to further inform Campfire Circle's evidence-based programming to promote improved long-term outcomes for our campers. With your support, we are helping more kids and families over the long-term.

CAMP COULD NOT HAPPEN WITHOUT OUR MEDICAL PARTNERS

Campfire Circle's programs are offered at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), McMaster Children's Hospital, Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), Credit Valley Hospital, and children's hospices and satellite centres across Ontario. These medical partners not only recommend our programs to kids in hospital, they also volunteer, where they're able to see their patients experiencing the joys of camp.

Our campers depend on the around-the-clock care that our passionate and dedicated volunteer doctors and nurses deliver. Whether it's treating tummy aches, dispensing medications, or providing chemotherapy, they help ensure that every kid at camp is safe and well.

Both Rainbow Lake and Muskoka sites have specialized medical facilities. Our Muskoka site is the only oncology camp in Canada that can provide IV chemotherapy and blood transfusions on site.





We rely on a team of doctors and nurses to run the Med Shed, Muskoka's medical facility, where all medications are stored, treatments take place, and where kids can take a break. At Rainbow Lake, in The Body Shop, nurses and doctors are on-call for any health or medication concerns, monitoring campers, and helping with first aid.

With the support of our medical team, all campers, even those on active treatment or with complex care needs, experience all camp activities. For

instance, nurses waterproof a PICC line so a camper has no hesitation in jumping in the lake, or a nurse may accompany campers on activities, just in case of emergencies. Thanks to our medical partners and our medical volunteers, we are able to confidently provide the level of care that our camper community knows and expects from us.



Medical advancements have dramatically changed over the last 35 years of nursing. What has not changed is the need for integrated healing. I didn't even recognize kids when they were at camp. That's the power of this place. Having fun is just as important."

—Judy Van Cleef, Chair, Human Resources Committee, Campfire Circle Board of Directors and Vice-President, Clinical Operations & Chief Nursing Officer, SickKids

FINDING TIME TO GIVE BACK

Finding the time to volunteer is one of the biggest challenges volunteers face.

Nikki Nguyen, a 22-year-old medical student at McMaster University, has been volunteering at Campfire Circle since 2018. Her older sister worked and volunteered at Campfire Circle and encouraged her to give it a try. While having a full course load is time consuming, Nikki always makes time for camp despite her busy schedule.

At the beginning, Nikki had a few doubts about volunteering. She wasn't sure she would be comfortable being silly with kids and she didn't have any prior camp counsellor experience. But she still signed up. She had so much fun she's been volunteering ever since.

"Everyone was so energetic. They were so excited to be at camp. It was such a whirlwind of emotions. It was super easy to fit in and feel comfortable with everyone because everyone was so welcoming. Even though I was a new volunteer, they truly showed me what the camp experience could be like."

Nikki has an interest in specializing in paediatrics, and volunteering has deepened her approach to patients in her medical practice.

"Camp reminds me of the psychosocial aspect of a person's health. When I'm interacting with families, I see how the medicine comes from hospital but the real healing comes from camp. It's so special and so valid. You can definitely see in some of these kids how camp is able to heal them from their experiences."

Although volunteering can be a lot to add on top of her full schedule, she describes feeling refreshed afterwards. For Nikki, volunteering is a break away from the real world and a nice reset.



IN 2023,
CAMPFIRE CIRCLE
VOLUNTEERS GAVE
85,256
HOURS OF THEIR TIME.

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

1 PROGRAM
EXPERIENCE =

1 IN-HOSPITAL
BEDSIDE VISIT OR
GROUP ACTIVITY

1 COMMUNITY
PROGRAM

1 DAY OF
OVERNIGHT
CAMP

OVERNIGHT
CAMP:

**10,337 DAYS
OF CAMP**

TEEN AND
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMS:

**173 PROGRAM
EXPERIENCES**

23,122

TOTAL PROGRAM
EXPERIENCES IN 2023,
AN INCREASE OF
32% FROM 2022.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM:

**2,356 PROGRAM
EXPERIENCES**

IN-HOSPITAL PROGRAM:

**10,256 PROGRAM
EXPERIENCES**

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Campfire Circle provides camp-inspired experiences that are inclusive, collaborative, and engaging through intentional program design. Programs are developed with outcome goals in mind, such as building skills and competencies that are associated with resiliency, connectedness, and well-being. Campfire Circle evaluates all our programs on an ongoing basis, to better understand and measure their impact.



OVERNIGHT KIDS CAMP

95% of respondents agree that attending camp helped their child feel a sense of belonging

88% agree that camp helped their child develop social and emotional skills

88% agree that camp helped their child feel more resilient

95% agree that camp had a positive impact on their child's mental health and well-being

FAMILY CAMP

99% of respondents agreed that Family Camp had a positive impact on their family's mental health and well-being

100% of respondents agreed they felt welcomed and included

94% agreed that camp is an important support system for their family





BONFIRE BASH

On Thursday, November 2, Campfire Circle hosted Bonfire Bash, presented by GFL Environmental Inc., at the Fort York Armoury in Toronto. The event brought together more than 750 guests to raise \$1.75 million in support of our critical year-round programs for kids with cancer or serious illness and their families.

Honourary Co-Chairs Sylvia Mantella, Suzanne Rogers, and Andrew and Marianne Guizzetti, spoke to the crowd about the profound impact of camp. During the gala, Emmanuelle Gattuso, a longstanding supporter of Campfire Circle, offered to match donations up to \$100,000, which led to a sea of guests raising their hands to support the organization.

Paddle Project, presented by BMO, brought together over 100 artists, designers, athletes, and celebrities to create one-of-a-kind canoe paddles which were auctioned off online and in person at the gala, raising more than \$126,000. A huge thank you to Chair Pam Mecklinger and the committee who helped make it possible.

Our gratitude goes out to all the sponsors, committee members, guests, donors, camper families and many volunteers who helped make this event such a success.



In 2023, with the generous support of our donors, Campfire Circle exceeded \$15 million in revenue to fund our in-hospital, community, and overnight camp programs. This enabled us to provide 23,122 program experiences. As a privately funded charity, we are grateful to our community for financially supporting these essential experiences.

We are pleased to report that in 2023, we returned to our pre-COVID operating levels, driven by the resumption of all in-person programs and events. Through prudent financial management, we prioritized using operating reserves to serve as many children as possible, recognizing that our annual fundraising revenues will need time to match our program expenses post-pandemic. We are on track to achieve an operating surplus in 2024/25 and remain dedicated to managing the financial resources entrusted to us, ensuring the growth and sustainability of our programs across Ontario.

FINANCE UPDATE



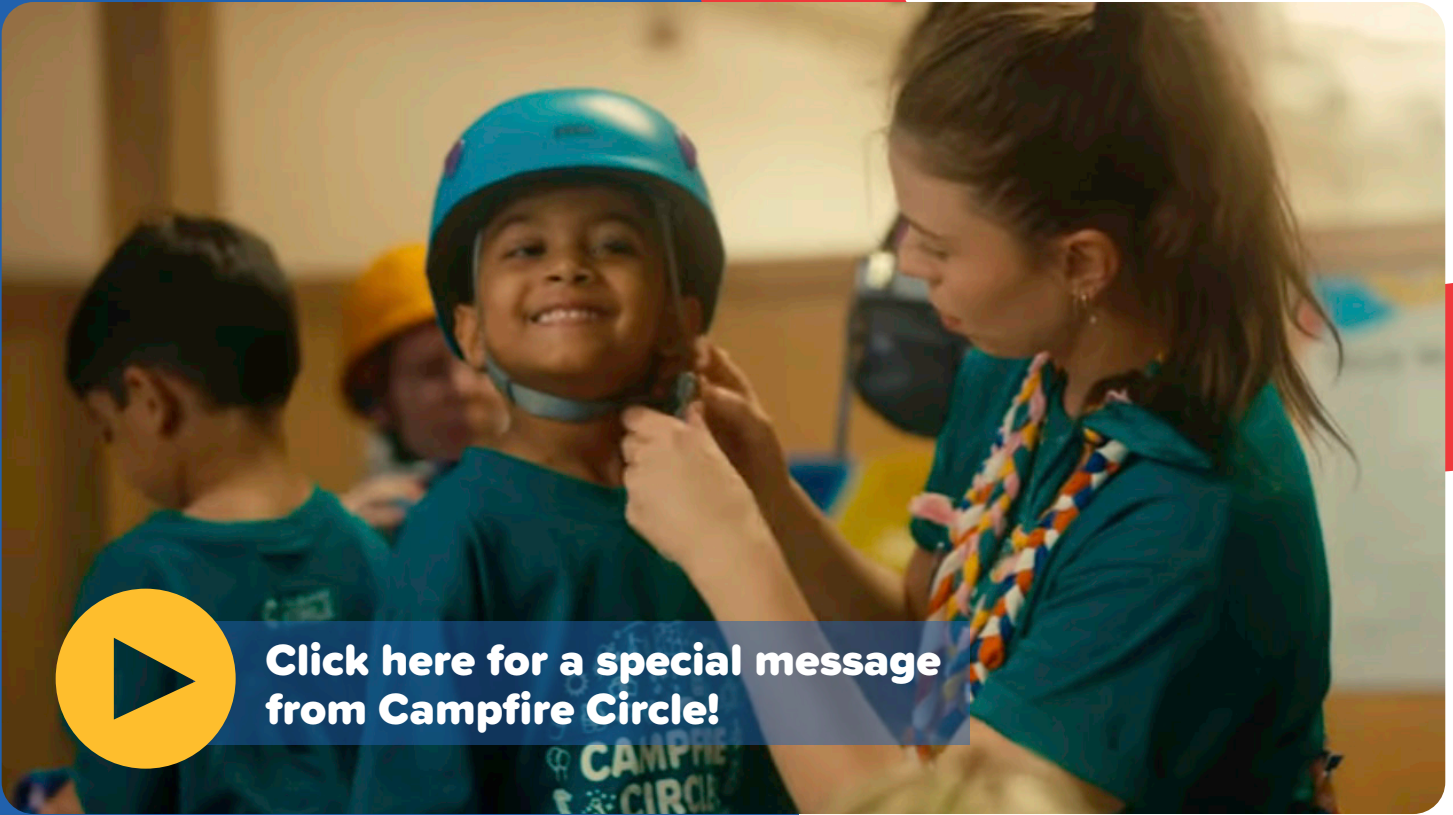
- **Donations and fundraising: 92%**
- **Investment, rental, and other: 8%**



- **Camp programs: 67%**
- **Fundraising: 22%**
- **Administration, rental & other: 11%**

2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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



Click here for a special message from Campfire Circle!

THANK YOU!

OUR DONOR WALL

OUR BOARD

Thanks to our dedicated community of supporters like you, we can continue to bring more healing through happiness to kids with cancer or serious illness and their families.

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!

Ontario Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

ACCREDITED MEMBER



ONTARIO CAMPS ASSOCIATION

Community. Leadership. Life.



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CLICK HERE

to visit our website and
learn more about how
we create a world where
children thrive.

