

GOING

GRATITUDE
REPORT 2023

BEYOND



HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

As Campfire Circle celebrates its 40th anniversary, we want to thank you for your generosity in helping us reach more children and families than ever before.

OVERNIGHT CAMP

Thanks to our generous donors, our overnight camps were buzzing with activity and the joyous sounds of kids being kids, a reminder that camp has never been more essential. At Muskoka, we had the largest number of Leader-In-Training campers ever. Teens affected by cancer often miss out on major milestones like high school and first jobs that help them develop the critical social and emotional skills needed to thrive in the future. Camp offers a unique and inclusive opportunity to learn new skills in a safe and medically supported environment.

At Rainbow Lake (Waterford, ON), we had nine weeklong family camp sessions this summer. Family camp helps families reconnect and participate in accessible activities with their kids, and it also provides some special moments for both kids and caregivers.

Doctors and nurses at our **on-site hospital, the Med Shed**, distributed

5,524 medications this summer.

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

Thanks to the support of donors, we built a new, wheelchair-accessible dock at Campfire Circle Rainbow Lake. It has two-height railings that allow campers in wheelchairs to rest fully against the edge of the dock without having a bench as a barrier, while the canopy provides kids with photosensitivity the access to both water and shade. We also installed a wheelchair lift at our outdoor pool, so campers with mobility devices can safely get in and out of the water.

Together, we can ensure all kids have the same opportunities.



BRINGING JOY TO THE BEDSIDE

Campfire Circle is the trusted mental well-being and play partner to Ontario's leading paediatric hospitals and delivers programming on hospital floors across the province. We continue to provide programming for oncology patients and we are excited to share that this past year we have been working with our hospital partners to serve even more children with serious illness.

At SickKids, the team expanded to the 6th floor, supporting children with serious illnesses such as multi-organ transplants and medical specialties. Campfire Circle was also asked to host a hospital-wide camp week for all patients. Themed as a "canoe trip" around the hospital, the Campfire Circle team met more than 530 campers in one week alone.

Both McMaster Children's Hospital and Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre hosted their own camp weeks themed around Mario Kart. Campers made their own karts and tracks, created crafts and had Mario-themed scavenger hunts! We also now provide programming at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), two days a week, and bring the camp experience to CHEO's inpatient units and outpatient clinics two to three times a year through camp weeks.

HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS

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. 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



Levels of resilience in children were high at camp. 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.

HOPE



The Trent team found that children had statistically significant higher levels of hope at camp than at home. During camp, kids are highly motivated to pursue their goals and figure out ways to achieve them.

SOCIAL SUPPORT



While at camp, children reported high levels of well-being and social support and these levels remained high even three months post camp.

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.

THANK YOU!

With your support, we are providing critical programming for children with cancer or serious illness and their families.

Thank you for your incredible generosity.

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HEALING THROUGH HAPPINESS