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Contact: Matthew M. Hoidal, Esq.(207) 655-3800

Beryl Wolfe (207) 883-6083

E-mail: mhoidal@campsunshine.org

Web Site: www.campsunshine.org

Camp Sunshine Announces 2007 Programs

Now year-round, Camp Sunshine offers a free camp experience for families of children with serious illnesses throughout the U.S.

CASCO, Maine – Camp Sunshine, one of the only programs in the U.S. to offer camp vacations throughout the year for entire families of seriously ill children, has announced its 2007 programs.

The week-long camp programs, which are offered free of charge to the families who are chosen to participate, provide a variety of leisure activities while also addressing the challenges of specific illnesses such as cancer, but also rare diseases such as Diamond-Blackfan Anemia, Fanconi Anemia and solid organ transplants. A total of 27 sessions will be offered throughout the year in 2007, including three sessions devoted to cancer beginning in February.

Families primarily come from Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, however more than 100 medical facilities from California to Connecticut – listed on the Camp Sunshine website at www.campsunshine.org – refer children and their families to the camp.

Families who wish to apply for a camp program may do so through the organization's website. Last year, the camp hosted more than 750 families. This year, the camp hopes to serve more than 800 children and their families.

Founded in 1984, Camp Sunshine, located along the shores of Sebago Lake, was the first and is still one of the only camps in the nation to focus on the entire family, not just the child who is ill. The programs include 24-hour onsite medical and psychosocial support. Bereavement groups also are offered for families who have lost a child to an illness.

In addition, Camp Sunshine also is seeking volunteers and donations towards its ongoing \$14.5 million capital campaign. Over the years, Camp Sunshine has served more than 24,000 campers from 44 states and 15 countries.

"We offer a different kind of vacation for these families," said Matthew M. Hoidal, executive director of Camp Sunshine. "It's holistic and therapeutic, but it's also fun. The winter sessions offer sledding, skiing at nearby Shawnee Peak, ice skating, snow shoeing and, of course, meeting new friends whose lives are also

affected by an illness. Indoor activities include swimming in the indoor heated pool, arts and crafts, and games such as pool or ping pong are offered in the teen center. We also toast marshmallows in the dining room's floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace. The kids have a lot of fun, but so do their families."

Hoidal said there are also adult-focused activities and group meetings for families who wish to share their experiences. These "parent discussion groups" offer families the rare opportunity to connect with and support each other.

The winter and spring program schedule, which is geared toward families going through specific illnesses, is as follows:

February 9-11 Mixed Diagnosis

February 16-20 Oncology

February 21-25 Oncology

March 2-4 Families Helping Families/Facing Challenges

March 23-25 Oncology

April 20-22 Oncology - Ronald McDonald Houses - Spring Fling

April 27-29 Oncology - "Spring Bake" – Lobster Weekend

May 25-29 Bereavement

The camp will also offer programs in the summer and fall for families facing Bereavement, Solid Organ Transplant, Oncology/Retinoblastoma, Brain Tumors, Hematology, Oncology, Leukemia & Lymphoma, Renal, Fanconi Anemia, Leukemia/Down Syndrome, Lupus, Women Helping Women and Mixed Diagnosis.

For a detailed schedule, application and additional information, visit the camp's website at www.campsunshine.org, or call (207) 655-3800.