It is with profound sadness that Camp Sunshine has incurred another great loss in the death of founding board member and selfless volunteer, Joseph Pappalardo. “Papa Joe,” as he was known to many of us, left the greatest legacy anyone can, of giving from the heart. Joe, along with his wife Joan, came to Camp Sunshine with a simple wish to help others... and help he did.

Joe worked tirelessly for Camp, building the volunteer force, becoming Camp’s greatest advocate to every organization, individual, and Camp Sunshine family. Joe was the fabric of what makes Camp Sunshine so unique; his heartfelt joy in helping others transcended all barriers. There has never been anyone who entered those three doors, who did not feel his love and support. Families, kids, volunteers, staff, and board members all loved and appreciated Joe. I will always remember Joe walking from table to table to talk to everyone. He will be sorely missed, but his legacy of giving will live in the walls of Camp Sunshine and our hearts forever (ADDITIONAL STORY ON PAGE 5).
A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Donors support us in a variety of ways. Some individuals donate their time and talents, some donate needed funds or provide gifts in kind, and some spread awareness to others, introducing them to the magic of Camp Sunshine and a multitude of amazing possibilities.

One story of altruism of note that I would like to share with you took place just this past summer and involves all three types of donations. Let me set the stage for you... One of our dedicated volunteers, we’ll call her Robin (mostly because that’s her real name), had just completed another life-changing week at Camp Sunshine. When Robin returned home, she still felt the pull of Camp Sunshine... What else can I do? How can I help? So, Robin called me at Camp and declared, “Mike, I want to do more! I have a cousin that is a talent agent and I would like to approach him on behalf of Camp and ‘Boldly go’ forward by asking him to find a celebrity to embrace Camp Sunshine as their cause.” With Camp’s blessing, Robin moved into action. Well, as they say in show business, “The box office never opened,” and the first attempt did not work out. But, Robin was not dissuaded, in fact, she went into “warp speed” and with her cousin’s assistance, was able to find the perfect match. Anton Yelchin, one of the stars of the new Star Trek movie, was taken by the mission of Camp Sunshine and selected Camp as his charity of choice.

As Anton’s selected charity, Camp Sunshine became part of a fundraising raffle to benefit nine different organizations. When all was said and done, over $100,000 was presented to Camp Sunshine to help children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. The moral of this story is that anyone can make a difference. You can make a difference! Robin volunteered, spread awareness, and through her efforts was instrumental in procuring funds on behalf of Camp families.

Thank you to all our Donors! You truly make Camp happen!

MICHAEL KATZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR UPDATES, PHOTOS, VIDEOS, AND MORE!

DONATE WHILE YOU SHOP!

2015 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS
BY ACTIVITIES SUPERVISOR, CARLEY WILLIAMS

With another season behind us, we take a look back on all the wonderful moments and memories we had with our special guests who stopped in to visit and share their personal stories and talents.

Some of the highlights included former Winter Olympian and Maine native Julia Clukey talking about what it is like being on the U.S. Luge team, Miss Maine & Miss Teen Maine USA stopping in to say hello, and players from the Portland Pirates hockey team demonstrating their skill and playing floor hockey with the children and volunteers.

We also hosted the Cumberland County K-9 Unit and campers were able to see these trained dogs in action. The Maine Red Claws basketball players shot baskets with the children and volunteers, the Eagle Bass Masters fishermen and Mountain View Woodies Boat Club provided the opportunity for the campers to see and enjoy the beauty of Sebago Lake. Casco Fire and Rescue also stopped in to show off their emergency vehicles, the famous L.L. Bean Bootmobile arrived with fun and games, Rick Charette entertained children and families with his special songs and dances, the U.S. Marshal Service let the kids try on their equipment and the professional chefs from the Culinary Corps spent a week teaching the children how to be great chefs and create cuisine from around the world!

A couple of my favorite highlights from the year were when the Maine Game Wardens and film crew from North Woods Law on Animal Planet, made a surprise appearance to visit a devoted fan! They graciously took time out of their very busy schedules of helping keep our Maine woods and waterways safe, to visit with one little boy and his family during one of our Brain Tumor sessions. After this special meeting they remained at Camp and talked with all the families, showing off their film equipment, vehicles with lights and sirens, and spoke about their daily duties. They also took pictures and signed autographs to everyone’s delight.

Another, special moment took place, when we were joined by the Bubbleguy from Boston. It was a warm beautiful sunny day when he blew the children and families away with his life-size bubbles. The kids frolicked on the field by the volleyball court, chasing all different size and shape bubbles for hours. The Bubbleguy was a giant hit that brought families together during an afternoon of family free time.

All of these special events, made possible by some amazing people, assisted in making the Camp Sunshine experience even more memorable for all who attended. It was an eventful year with something different every week. We look forward to having even more special guests, surprises, and magical moments in 2016!!
NATIONAL FLIP FLOP DAY A HUGE SUCCESS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Nearly 450 Tropical Smoothie Café locations joined forces this past summer for Camp Sunshine’s biggest fundraising and awareness raising campaign ever. Through donation collection efforts and by handing out free 24 oz. Jetty Punch smoothies to flip-flop-wearing guests on National Flip Flop Day the national franchise raised $1,000,000! The 2016 National Flip Flop Day is scheduled for June 17!

CEO MIKE ROTONDO WALKS LENGTH OF NEW YORK CITY IN FLIP-FLOPS

With 2015 NFFD raising $1 million, Tropical Smoothie Café now holds the distinction of having made the largest corporate gift received by Camp Sunshine since its founding in 1984. The partnership with the national smoothie and sandwich franchise began in 2008, when Tropical Smoothie Café found Camp Sunshine listed as a top-rated charity by Charity Navigator. Impressed by its compelling mission, fiscal responsibility, and national reach, they chose Camp Sunshine to be their national charity partner, and beneficiary of their National Flip Flop Day fundraising and promotional campaign. To date, Tropical Smoothie Café has raised more than $3.6 million to provide children with life-threatening illnesses and their families the opportunity to experience the magic of Camp Sunshine.

In addition to the fundraising efforts on National Flip Flop Day, many franchisees have organized golf tournaments, road races, fashion shows, and other events to increase funding and awareness.

“Tropical Smoothie Café is devoted to ensuring that Camp Sunshine thrives, so it can continue to be a lifeline, not only for children with life threatening illnesses, but for their families as well,” said Mike Rotondo, CEO of Tropical Smoothie Café. “With support from our franchisees, guests, and the residents of New York City, we were able to hit our $1,000,000 mark and are thrilled to know what a huge impact this will have for everyone at Camp Sunshine.”

TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFÉ MAKES HISTORIC GIFT

In addition to sponsoring families and assisting with transportation costs, funds also support Tropical Smoothie Café Week each summer, where Camp Sunshine celebrates the company’s support, along with representatives from the company who take time off to volunteer in the program.

To help kick-off the campaign, Tropical Smoothie Café CEO Mike Rotondo, went above and beyond to show his steadfast dedication to Camp Sunshine in June, by walking the length of Manhattan wearing just flip flops! Joined by Camp Executive Director, Mike Katz and staff members and volunteers from both organizations, they happily handed out free smoothies to hundreds of New Yorkers at some of the most iconic landmarks in New York City, including the American Museum of Natural History, Central Park, Times Square, Madison Square Park, and Battery Place.

“What an amazing group of people to partner with... Their energy and enthusiasm is contagious! From CEO Mike Rotondo to each individual franchisee owner, the commitment and support for Camp Sunshine is palpable, with the momentum continuing to build!” said Mike Katz. He later added, “Tropical Smoothie Café’s wide ranging appeal and its loyal customer base have not only provided tremendous financial support to help Camp Sunshine families, but have been instrumental in raising awareness for our mission in areas where Tropical Smoothie Café has a presence.”
L.L. BEAN PUMPKIN FESTIVAL  L.L. Bean graciously played host once again to the 13th annual Camp Sunshine Pumpkin Festival on the campus of their flagship store in Freeport, Maine, and Camp Sunshine would like to thank all the volunteers, sponsors, and families whose support made the festival such a glowing success! Over 7,500 illuminated jack-o-lanterns were displayed at the day-long, family-friendly event. Special thanks to presenting sponsors Hancock Lumber, Party City, and Shaw’s Supermarkets. The 14th annual Pumpkin Festival will take place on October 22, 2016!

MAINE SUITCASE PARTY  The Maine Suitcase Party has raised over $250,000 and planning is underway for the 5th annual event, with a goal to raise $100,000 in September. Mark Richard of Keller Williams Realty, who approached Camp Sunshine with the idea, shared, “It’s been more than a fundraiser, it’s a win-win! Over the years we have become partners. Our agents have done work days at Camp and CS has participated with us by donating a van for a rescue mission after hurricane Sandy, attending planning meetings, and giving back to KW CARES.” Visit mainesuitcaseparty.com for 2016 details!

SEALs FOR SUNSHINE 2015

A NOTE FROM THE SEALs  Why do we do this? It certainly isn’t fun to swim 13 miles or run down Mt. Washington, but neither is having a life-threatening illness. Service is more than wearing a uniform; it is also something every citizen should do in their community. The SEALs for Sunshine event provides us an opportunity to stay connected at the local level and also support our military families in need when they have a child facing a life-threatening illness. This resonates very deeply with us, as we are often faced with life-threatening challenges in service to our nation. Challenges come in many forms: sometimes physical, other times mental or emotional, and more often in all three. This event is a literal interpretation of the many challenges Camp Sunshine families go through every day. However, we know the struggles they endure are harder than anything we will face in our event. But just as they don’t have the option to quit, for us, failure is not an option. If our efforts can help one family attend Camp, bring awareness of Camp to a family in need, or provide strength through solidarity with current Camp families, then our efforts have been worth it and our actions have meant something.

SEALs who participated engaged in activities throughout the course of their time at Camp Sunshine, answering questions, while learning about families’ experiences.
“NEVER SAY NO TO JOE!” The phrase still echoes in my head. Over time the reason would become as crystal clear as Sebago Lake. This man, more affectionately known as “Papa Joe,” brought that sentiment out in everybody. He lead by example, and the inspiration he provided to others made saying “No” impossible, not because you couldn’t, but for this man, you didn’t want to!

I have had the good fortune and privilege of knowing, working with, and more importantly learning from Joe for three decades. It was Joe that passed the volunteer baton to me when Camp opened the doors to its permanent facility in 2001. He was always there as a resource and even entrusted me with his coveted Volunteer Rolodex. Looking back over the years, I realize that Joe was part of the initial building blocks that would become Camp Sunshine and then one of the pillars that kept it upright.

Through his drive and dedication the Camp Sunshine volunteer force would not only grow, but flourish. It was under his tutelage that the volunteer community took shape, and then took off! Over time Joe’s role would change, but his passion for Camp Sunshine would remain steadfast. Whether serving as Board Treasurer, speaking in front of a community group, organizing the Camp Sunshine Golf Tournament, stuffing envelopes for a mailing, or collecting coin canisters at local businesses, this Jefferson Award-winning volunteer attacked each task with purpose and enthusiasm.

With a friendly smile, a pat on your back, a knock on your wall as he passed by your office with a good morning hello, or even some good natured ribbing, Joe made everyone feel at ease. Joe, although your impact on Camp will be felt forever... you, my friend, will be missed!

REMEMBERING JOSEPH PAPPALARDO, CONTINUED

PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE
A LEGACY OF GIVING

Migis Lodge on Sebago Lake has been a proud partner of Camp Sunshine since Camp’s inception in 1984. Both organizations are committed to helping create remarkable family memories that revolve around the brilliance of Sebago Lake.

Over the years, Migis Lodge has been involved with the growth and development of Camp Sunshine in a number of important ways – such as Tim Porta, owner of Migis Lodge, serving on our Board of Directors for nearly two decades, as well as the Migis catering team providing phenomenal support to many of Camp Sunshine’s largest special events such as the SEALs for Sunshine Gala and the Maine Suitcase Party. Migis Hotel Group has also donated vacation stays at its properties for our silent auctions, along with myriad financial contributions which have helped further Camp Sunshine’s mission of offering respite services to even more children with life-threatening illnesses and their families.

Camp Sunshine applauds and humbly thanks Migis Lodge for its continued support as it embarks on its 100th year, and we are seeking to enhance the connection between the families of Migis Lodge and the families of Camp Sunshine. The brick walkway campaign is a permanent way for Migis guests to symbolize their time at Migis and on Sebago Lake, by purchasing an engraved 4” x 8” brick to be placed in a designated “Migis Centennial Section” on the property.

A LETTER FROM MIGIS OWNERS, TIM, JOAN, & JED PORTA

We are very honored and excited to be once again partnering with Camp Sunshine as we get ready to celebrate our 100th Anniversary. We are calling our campaign “100 Families for 100 Years.” In honor of our 100 years in operation, we are hoping to raise enough money to send 100 children with life threatening illnesses and their families to Camp Sunshine. There is no charge for attendees at Camp Sunshine: the cost to sponsor a family’s week at Camp is $2,500. With the support of our family and friends, business associates and our valued Migis guests, we are hoping to raise $250,000 to achieve our goal of sponsoring 100 families.

Migis Lodge is so fortunate to have been serving families and making memories on the shores of Sebago Lake since 1916. We are delighted to help further the remarkable mission of Camp Sunshine and its efforts to serve the families that they do, helping children and their families dealing with life-threatening illness through their arduous journey to find a renewed feeling of hope and sense of community.

On behalf of everyone at Migis Lodge, we would like to sincerely thank our guests for their patronage over the years. We are thrilled to be celebrating our 100th anniversary, and we are hopeful that we will reach our “100 Families for 100 Years” goal of raising $250,000 for Camp Sunshine in 2016.

Respectfully,

Tim, Joan & Jed Porta
MEET THE 2015 DOCS

IRENE CHERRICK, MD
• Upstate University Hospital

CHRISTINE HOM, MD
• Westchester Medical Center

R. STANLEY HUM, MD
• Columbia University Medical Center

MARK SIEGEL, MD
• Hackensack University Medical Center

ALISON FRIEDMANN, MD
• Massachusetts General Hospital

LEIGH ETTINGER, MD
• Hackensack University Medical Center

PETER MANLEY, MD
• Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

CHRIS TURNER, MD
• Celldex Therapeutics

SINCE 2006

LINDA SIEGEL, MD
• Cohen Children’s Medical Center

SINCE 2001

MEDICAL DIRECTOR
ANDY EICHENFIELD, MD

Dr. Andrew Eichenfield has been working with Camp Sunshine since 1987, and in 2000 became the Medical Director. For the past decade, Dr. Eichenfield has also served as a pediatric rheumatologist at Columbia University Medical Center. Prior to that, he was employed as the Chief of the Division of Pediatric Rheumatology at The Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, having done his fellowship and early years as an attending physician at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

With a strong commitment to families living with rheumatological illnesses, Dr. Eichenfield has brought awareness and leadership to Camp Sunshine’s lupus program. Camp Sunshine is the only program nationally which serves families of children with lupus.

Although Dr. Eichenfield has many accomplishments, he is unique in that he is the only pediatric rheumatologist with a particular interest in bone marrow failure disorders, as the result of having served as the doctor for every Fanconi Anemia Research Fund Family Meeting since its inception.

A recognized expert on Lyme disease, he has been regularly listed as one of New York Magazine’s “Best Doctors” and recently received a Compassionate Physician award from the Arnold Gold Foundation.

He serves as the onsite physician for many sessions annually. In that role, he is entertaining with children and thoughtful with parents. Additionally, he provides his own flare to the performance of “Hands Up.”

Known for his keen diagnostic skills, Camp Sunshine is quite fortunate in having Dr. Eichenfield’s ability, loyalty, persistence, candor, and sense of humor, each of which contribute to his excellence when the program is in operation. Camp Sunshine is privileged to have such an astute, capable, and devoted Medical Director.

In Dr. Eichenfield’s words, “The best thing about being at Camp Sunshine is meeting so many nice people concentrated in one place.”

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Recruited under the auspice of Andrew Eichenfield, M.D., Camp Sunshine physicians bring their many talents and their very capable family members to join the entourage of helping at Camp. There are physicians who plunge into the ocean to raise money for Camp Sunshine, there are others whose family members plunge, and there are knitters, origami folders, photographers, brownie makers, frog catchers, lifeguards, and then some. There are spouses, children, siblings, parents, cousins, aunts and more.

In the families of some of our doctors there are children old enough to volunteer, and bring groups from their schools to volunteer; in other families there are spouses who bring school groups to volunteer, and in yet other families there are spouses or siblings who are also doctors! What an amazing crew! Among them there are consistent themes of healing, helping and caring. On many levels, Camp Sunshine doctoring is a family affair.
FAMILY STORIES

A LIFETIME WITH OUR CAMP FAMILY

When we first walked through the doors at Camp Sunshine in February of 2011, it almost burst into tears. It was emotional coming to terms with that we were a family fighting cancer and that we were visiting a camp for families facing life-threatening illnesses. Our three year-old daughter, Sophie had been diagnosed with leukemia a few months before and this was our first trip away from home and the hospital. Over the course of the five days at Camp our family found strength, courage, support and hope.

Camp Sunshine has brought healing to every member of our family over the last 5 years. Every single session we have attended has been a unique experience and we have encountered helpful hands, warm embraces, and smiling faces at every turn. Every need was met, whether we were able to articulate it or not. We could just let go at Camp. We could breathe! It is simply the best medicine and the greatest gift for families both during and post-treatment.

“We had the best week of my life! Promise me we’ll come again!” Ava, Sophie’s big sister, exclaimed, as we drove away from Camp Sunshine. We would come to hear those words after every visit over the years. Ava always had the time of her life during the action-packed and fun Camp sessions - swimming, skiing for the first time, group activities, kayaking, sleep outs, talent shows, games, and so much more. But, what she appreciated most was being with other children who shared her experience of having a sibling with cancer. The sibling journey is a difficult one and Camp Sunshine understands that, as is reflected in all of their programming.

“When I am a big girl and I come back, I am going to climb the ladder and sleep on the top bunk!” Sophie announced boldly. She had spent the majority of her first week at Camp with her one-on-one counselor in the large dress up closet and even sang a solo on stage at the talent show! Over the years, Sophie has actively participated in all Camp activities. The door was always open, whether she felt like joining in or hanging back. It was at her pace and she felt safe.

As parents, Camp Sunshine has given us a safe haven to talk about our experience with other parents who understand first hand what it means to have a child with cancer and the impact on the whole family.

We are forever grateful and look forward to a lifetime with our Camp family - both as participants and future volunteers. It’s a gift we want to keep passing on!

THE STRENGTH TO CONTINUE

Our son was diagnosed with a tectal glioma four years ago, when he was eight. Since then, he has suffered through two failed chemotherapy treatments and multiple surgeries, including three brain surgeries. This past summer, just as he recovered from his last chemotherapy, we learned that he needed to undergo a de-bulking surgery in early August. Since we were informed that the surgery was low risk, we were stunned when he did not wake up afterwards, and we soon learned that the surgery had caused three strokes. It took him months to be able to speak fluently again, and his memory and cognition were significantly impaired.

He’s a joyful, outgoing boy who loves people and loves life, and one of my biggest fears since the surgery has been that his exuberant spirit would be broken. Because of Camp Sunshine, I know this is not going to happen. Camp Sunshine had already been our place of solace, but after the strokes it became our lifeline.

When we parked our car to check in at the front desk—our first trip back after the last surgery—it was late in the evening. The moment we arrived, a group of friends ran to the car to greet us with hugs and laughter, and my son basked in the loving welcome he received from his buddies. Highlights were when he was able to stay awake for competitive ping pong games and performed an impromptu talent show dance to the rap song, “All I Do is Win,” with two close friends and his counselor. Before our visit, he had expressed the fear that since he was “not himself,” he no longer felt lovable. The love and acceptance he received at Camp Sunshine revitalized him and helped him to recover the ability to feel okay in the world. Camp Sunshine provided a lift in the healing process that even his outstanding rehabilitation team had not been able to provide.

Camp Sunshine has also been essential for everyone else in our family. My husband and I have been nourished by the helpful information, emotional support, and abundant love that we have received from the Camp Sunshine community. When I finally convinced our fifteen-year-old daughter to join us at Camp, she grumbled at first, but very quickly came to feel the magic of Camp. She took part in the sibling support group, and for the first time she came to realize how much she is affected by her brother’s situation, and that she also needs support. As a result, she developed more empathy toward her brother—and toward herself.

Camp Sunshine has given our family the strength to continue our difficult journey. I never imagined that we would be blessed with such an incredible community of people. Thank you, Camp Sunshine!
We are incredibly grateful for the support of The Dale Foundation, a first time donor from Northborough, Massachusetts. The generous contribution made by this foundation will allow many more families to experience the magic of Camp Sunshine.

The Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation in Wilmington, Delaware made a generous contribution of $10,000. The foundation provides funding in support of other nonprofit institutions, communities, and organizations that are or that have been instrumental in strengthening and heightening both culturally and educationally, the impact of research, medical, health, educational, sports, social service, and artistic programs in communities across the nation, from coast to coast.

**NEW FOUNDATIONS**

In 2015, Party City collected donations at more than 800 Party City retail stores to support Camp Sunshine. The outpouring of support was overwhelming, and the stores collectively raised $205,950, far exceeding all expectations.

Party City went on to sponsor the July 3-8 session for children diagnosed with brain tumors and their families.

“Party City Week” at Camp Sunshine was a blast and ensured families would forget, even if just for a moment, the trials and tribulations they face. As the nation’s largest retailer of party goods - that week’s masquerade party was one to remember!

Just In: Party City has selected Camp Sunshine for it’s March Instore Fundraiser Program! Please, stop by a Party City near you for your St. Patrick Day & Easter party needs. A great way to help Camp Sunshine while having some fun!

**THANK YOU, PARTY CITY!**

**NEW FOUNDATIONS**

**WAYS TO GIVE**

1) Sponsor a family
2) Underwrite a capital project
3) Contribute to the endowment
4) Matching gifts from your company
5) Corporate partnerships
6) Sponsor an event
7) Host an event
8) Donate gifts in-kind
9) Planned giving
10) Purchase a walkway brick

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**POIINT SEBAGO RESORT**

**JUNE 13, 2016**

Premier Sponsor - Team of Four - $1,000
Corporate Sponsor - Team of Four - $800
Team of Four - $600
Individual Player - $150
CS Volunteer or Family - $125

**WAYS TO GIVE**

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2) Underwrite a capital project
3) Contribute to the endowment
4) Matching gifts from your company
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SPECIAL EVENTS

SIENNA’S GOLD GALA

On September 25, 2015, the Cavallo family held a spectacular black-tie gala in memory of their daughter Sienna. The Cavallo family is one of a growing number of Camp Sunshine families who have at one time participated in Camp Sunshine’s programming, and are passionate about returning to Camp Sunshine to volunteer and raise awareness for Camp in their community.

“This event meant a lot to me, because it honored two of my favorite things, my daughter’s legacy and Camp Sunshine,” said Patty Cavallo, event coordinator and Camp Sunshine Family Volunteer.

Held during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Sienna’s Gold Gala offered 150 people the opportunity to enjoy an evening of cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, and dancing to help send children with life-threatening illnesses and their families to Camp Sunshine.

TRUCKING FOR KIDS CONVOY AND TOUCH-A-TRUCK

A convoy of 86 tractor trailer trucks and working-class vehicles making its way through Scarborough and South Portland, Maine is not something you see every day – only once a year. What many people do not know is that it’s all to support Camp Sunshine.

“We have not found an organization that is as well run and does so much for the kids and their families. The facility is first class and the Camp’s outstanding reputation is far-reaching, making it easy for our drivers to fundraise,” said the Maine Professional Drivers Association President, Denis Litalien.

Drivers in the convoy are also able to participate in a number of skills competitions and driver challenges at Scarborough Downs, as they compete for prizes and bragging rights. “At this event, truck drivers will come together and open their hearts and their wallets to ensure that a number of children with life-threatening illnesses and their families will be able to enjoy some special time at Camp Sunshine,” explained Litalien.

In 2015, the Trucking for Kids Convoy committee added a Touch-a-Truck event to the day’s line-up, where vehicles of all shapes and sizes were on display for attendees to check out. In 2016, the committee will continue to promote the Touch-a-Truck portion of the Convoy in order to encourage the public to come and see the trucks and the drivers and become more a part of the event.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE WITH A SMILE: 2015 BANK OF AMERICA CHICAGO MARATHON

Crossing the finish line of the 2015 Bank of America Chicago Marathon in her bright yellow shirt left Camp Sunshine volunteer, Lizdely Garcia, feeling accomplished, invigorated, and a bit overwhelmed.

“My entire experience was truly amazing. I had spectators cheering me on, yelling, “Go Sunshine Go!” It really brought the hugest smile to my face, especially knowing that not only did I finish the marathon, but I was able to raise enough money to send two families to Camp Sunshine in 2016,” said Garcia.

Garcia was one of eight members of Team Camp Sunshine 2015 who committed to raise at least $2,500 – enough to send a family to Camp Sunshine – in order to run the 2015 Bank of America Chicago Marathon. Also on this year’s Team: Sienna’s Gold Gala coordinator and Family Volunteer, Patty Cavallo; long-time Camp Sunshine Family Volunteer, Rachel Campbell; three first-time marathoners, Nicole Pinard, Kerry Lyons and David Zink-Mailloux; Camp Sunshine Volunteer, John McBride; and Camp Sunshine supporter, Marilyn Stasio.

Lizdely Garcia with her medal.
The funding of memories may seem ephemeral, but if you think about it, a good portion of everyone's life is built on, and lived within, the context of memories. We spend much of our lives remembering past events, using our memories to form the framework for the present. Memories serve as an avenue for synthesizing where we have been and enabling us to get to where we are. That “grounding” that everyone counts on becomes unstable when illness enters the picture. Life-threatening illnesses change memories. The new memories which embed themselves are illness memories, the treatments, the challenges.

In some ways, much of what we do at Camp Sunshine is to create snapshots to mitigate against the illness memories that children and family members fall victim to once a child is diagnosed. The flood of family memories and images from Camp Sunshine begin to replace images of the hospital and illness, opening up a new memory bank filled with silly experiences, fun, and many iterations of smiles. Opportunities to talk about what the illness experience has meant, sandwiched between these layers of laughter, creates a formula for healing.

Remembering that joy can be part of the cycle of illness is vital. Inasmuch as it is acceptable to cry at difficult moments, it is okay to find joy in each day, regardless of whether or not you are in the midst of a struggle.

One child, who had experienced an amputation as the result of her cancer, was walking past the dining hall with volunteers. She caught a glimpse of her parents doing their cheers and chants and promptly said to the volunteers, “My parents forgot to tell me that they know how to have fun.”

Joy comes cloaked in many forms at Camp Sunshine: a performance in the talent show, a sno-cone in the dining room, ice cream for breakfast, ice-skating on the Newcomb court, reaching the top of the climbing wall, or simply relaxing by the fire. Joy may come in the form of a child walking for the first time post-transplant, or playing a gigantic game of checkers, or with a father who was just planning on being in a kayak, finding himself waist deep in the lake. All these moments become cherished memories.

Embracing comfort and joy is not just about the holiday season at Camp Sunshine, but every season. The consistent memories on campus grow with each wish boat launch and new memories flourish with each celebration show. We aim to create things that are treasured and memorable so that when a family leaves Camp Sunshine, a memory of something magical leaves with and stays with them.

Each donation to Camp Sunshine, like each session, affords a population of people struggling with the burden of illness the ability to find laughter, receive and give support, and find joy. Every donor enables hope in his or her own unique way. Thank you for supporting each memory that comes alive at Camp Sunshine. Thank you for bringing laughter back.
I first arrived at Camp Sunshine in the summer of 2010 as a leader of a group of teens from our church. I knew my group was nervous, but I didn’t want to add to their apprehension by divulging my own fears to them. I was thinking, “What if I say the wrong thing to a family? What if I hurt a child’s feelings, because I can’t find the right words?”

Camera in hand, I started to walk around the remarkable campus and ran into my first camp family. “Who is the child who is sick?” I wondered. “What should I say?” Then one of the young boys turned around. CANCER SUCKS declared his hat. “I get it!” I thought.

Camp Sunshine, as I am frequently told, is a household name in Harvard, Massachusetts. Right now, my desk is overflowing with applications from anxious teens. Yes, volunteering meets the requirements for their community service. But they will return home with a new sense of awe after encountering real heroes up close and personal.

To earn our group’s required $250 donation to Camp, our teens plunge into icy water, organize car washes, bake sales, and trivia nights. They shovel snow and forego holiday gifts for donations. At church, our enthusiastic teens describe their time with the children and are generously rewarded by parishioners. Since that first visit in 2010, the Greater Harvard, MA Endowment has raised over $70,000. We sponsor two families each year in perpetuity and are halfway to a sponsorship of the front porch.

I have met some of the most amazing children and families that inspire me and make me want to do more. I truly cannot imagine my life without all the volunteer work I do in the childhood cancer community, both at Camp Sunshine and in my hometown area of Northern Virginia.

And my family in particular? By the second summer I went to Camp, my husband, Tom, and daughter, Lindsey, were along. We have each been to camp over 20 times in 5 years. Together with our other chaperones, we have brought over 200 teens to volunteer at Camp. Lindsey brings students from Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, MA, where she teaches. Their waffle and ice cream sales paid for the camp rescue boat.

Some compliment us for having the courage to volunteer. As I learned firsthand, it’s hardly our bravery that’s noteworthy. Those who have, or live with someone with a life-threatening illness, are the true heroes. To volunteer at Camp Sunshine brings a sense of purpose to our lives so we will continue to do whatever we can, as much as we can, and as often as we can.

Have you considered adding Camp Sunshine to your will? Planned giving is an opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of children with life-threatening illnesses and their families within the context of your overall financial plan. Make a gift that can benefit you while helping to secure the future of Camp Sunshine!
THANK YOU!

On behalf of the board, staff, volunteers and most of all our families, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your continued dedication to supporting the mission of Camp Sunshine. I am so proud of how the program has grown in the last 30 years and of the incomparable program we continue to provide. With your continued partnership, we can provide many more years of children smiling, parents giving each other support and volunteers receiving unparalleled gratification. Camp Sunshine truly is a magical place every time you enter the three iconic doors.

WWW.CAMPSUNSHINE.ORG • INFO@CAMPSUNSHINE.ORG
TEL - (207) 655-3800 • FAX - (207) 655-3825