

Then and Now Former camper and now volunteer RJ Hill calls Camp Sunshine his “happy place.” **Page 3**

An End of an Era Colleen Austin is stepping down as a volunteer after nearly 40 years of service. **Page 5**

Cargill Cares Through its community outreach program, Cargill Industries has been a steadfast supporter of Camp Sunshine. **Page 8**

C A M P S U N S H I N E



POSTCARDS

They're Baaaack! Former Campers Return as First Time Volunteers

It takes a lot of volunteers to make Camp Sunshine possible, and we are fortunate to have a stellar crew year after year. Of the nearly 200 volunteers at camp each year, about 30% are former campers, and this year we are thrilled to welcome back a large crew of first-time volunteers who happen to be alums.

“Alumni campers who return to volunteer at Camp Sunshine provide so much hope for our campers,” says Amy Moosbrugger, Camp Sunshine’s Volunteer Manager. “When a new camper, who may possibly be in the thick of treatment, arrives at Camp Sunshine and meets counselors who not only understand what they’re going through but have survived and are thriving, you watch as any despair and negativity fades away and is replaced with hope and happiness. It’s magical.”

Here are thoughts from a few of the first-time volunteers who were excited to spread the sunshine at summer camp this year.

Brett Bagley

My favorite memories from camp include waking up to the sound of a deep voice bellowing “POLAR BEAR,” learning to windsurf, trying so many new things and being willing to allow myself to have



Brett, third from left

emotionally vulnerable experiences that were scary – like dances. I’m looking forward to experiencing campers light up, find okayness, and radiate sunshine.

Julia York

My favorite memory of Camp Sunshine was at my last year as a camper in 2018 when I was asked to be a part of the ceremony that opened up the best week of summer. I was sad about it being my final year as a camper, but so happy to be back together with my friends, dancing to my favorite camp songs, and being filled with the joy of Camp Sunshine. I always knew that I wanted to come back as a

volunteer! I am most excited to give future campers the experience and memories that I got from camp! Words can truly not express the effect Camp



Julia, center

Sunshine made on my life, not only as a new camper who was trying to navigate what it was like to have cancer at 12 years old, but as a growing adult learning about teamwork and the wonderful Camp Sunshine values!

Kate Hansen

I wanted to come back to volunteer because of all the positive memories and supportive friends I



Kate, left

made while at Camp Sunshine. I want to help other campers create the same positive memories and feel that they are more than their illness. I’m looking forward

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DEAR CAMP SUNSHINE FRIENDS,

As I read these stories, I think “full circle” is a fitting metaphor for this edition of *Postcards*. They speak to the power of Camp Sunshine connections and to the commitment of giving back.

This is most true in our cover story, which spotlights Camp Sunshine alumni who came back to us this summer as first year volunteers. Their experience as a camper left such a lasting

impact, they returned years later to share the magic of Camp Sunshine with others.

This year, one out of three of our summer volunteers attended Camp Sunshine as a camper. These alumni are committed to helping children facing cancer, something they uniquely understand. They bring hope and a shared experience for which we are

truly grateful. They are our future leaders.

Colleen Austin is coming full circle in a different way. She's our featured volunteer this issue, and her time with us traces back to 1985, when she first showed up to lend a hand. Three

years later, Colleen became a camp nurse. Over the next several decades, she recruited other volunteer nurses and doctors; encouraged her patients to attend camp; and educated non-medical volunteers about childhood cancer.

This summer was Colleen's last at camp – but her time and skill have prepared a new cohort to continue the legacy of her work. The same can be said of RJ Hill, who is our “Then and Now” feature. He was once a camper; now, as a counselor, he is fulfilling a bigger purpose in giving back.

And then there is the story of Cargill Industries, our spotlighted Community Partner. The company has been a committed supporter of Camp Sunshine for years through a personal connection. You can read about that connection on page 8.

We at Camp Sunshine are so fortunate to have these full circles in our midst. The cycles of love and support that were present in the past continue today. We know they will be there tomorrow too – and for that, we're beyond grateful.

Sally Hale, Executive Director

OUR MISSION

Camp Sunshine enriches the lives of Georgia's children with cancer and their families through recreational, educational and support programs.

OUR VISION

The lives of children with cancer will be restored and strengthened by the embrace of our Camp Sunshine community.

A Circle of Sunshine

Donors who have included Camp Sunshine as part of their estate planning have made a meaningful legacy gift. We are honored to recognize these donors as members of the Circle of Sunshine.

At our annual Circle of Sunshine luncheon in September, we will host an intimate gathering at the Camp Sunshine House for these generous supporters. It is an event with a special guest list filled with sunshine that reflects many parts of our

camp community – parents of former campers, long-time volunteers, board members past and present, and dear camp friends. We are grateful to you all!

Interested in learning more about planning your gift, or would like to notify us of plans that you have already made? Please reach out to Alicia Brady at 404-325-7979 or alicia@mycampsunshine.com.★



THEN & NOW

RJ Hill's Story



"I got so much out of camp, I definitely wanted to give back what they had given me. You can't get that feeling anywhere else."

– RJ (back row, first on left)

Like many first time campers, RJ Hill was nervous about attending Camp Sunshine. He was eight years old and in the middle of treatment for Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He was concerned because he didn't know anyone at camp and was unsure about being away from his family. He also wasn't convinced a camp for kids with cancer would be a fun place to be.

Of course, he was wrong.

"As soon as I walked in the gym and heard all the clapping and cheering, I knew it was a happy place," RJ recalls.

Camp Sunshine became RJ's happy place almost every year for the next ten years. He loved doing all the activities – especially those around the water. He also relished the opportunity to be "just a kid – not a kid with cancer" and enjoyed the fact that he wasn't treated any differently.

"Camp is a place where you can be yourself," he says. "And you can push the limits. Counselors always said 'Let's try it!'"

RJ said that attitude gave him the confidence to try new things after he got home – like playing sports, something he was limited in doing while in treatment. RJ started playing baseball, basketball and tennis and continued all through high school. He also gained lifelong friendships while at camp.

"The activities are fun, but the real value of camp is in the camaraderie and the connections that you make," he says. "Everyone knows what you are going through."

RJ knew from an early age that he would someday return as a volunteer. In 2019, he returned as a cabin

counselor during Teen Week.

"I got so much out of camp, I definitely wanted to give back what they had given me," he says. "You can't get that feeling anywhere else."

As a cancer survivor, he can share his story and when kids are struggling, he encourages them to be positive.



RJ at camp in 1994 (front row, first on left)

"When a camper says 'I can't do it, I have cancer,' I tell them that so did I and I made it through, and they can too."

RJ has made a career working as an operations supervisor for PVH Corporation, a division of Tommy Hilfiger, and has two children of his own. He has come full circle from camper to counselor and now he's on the other side of the clapping and cheering, providing the joy and the energy that had greeted him all those years ago.

"I'm standing in the same spot I was when I was eight years old, fulfilling a bigger purpose," he says. "I get so much out of it. These kids give you just as much if not more than what you give them. It's the greatest place on earth." ✨



They're Baaaack! Former Campers Return as First Time Volunteers, continued from page 1

to the opportunity to create relationships with other volunteers and learn from their experiences. Having the chance to return to camp in a new role is going to be an eye-opening experience that I am incredibly excited for.

East Coffman

Camp Sunshine is deeply important to me – it's always been a place where I feel I truly belong. Since I graduated, I've never stopped missing camp in my life. In coming back, I'm most



East, center

looking forward to the connections. There is nothing quite like the connection between people who've had cancer – it's a life experience that changes you, and it's so important to be around others who truly get it so we can support each other. I'm greatly looking forward to connecting with the kids as an adult role model who is

also a cancer survivor, and I'm also looking forward to getting to know the other counselors and staff."

J'Dyka Wiggins

Camp Sunshine has always been a major part of my life, even after I left. I've always needed Camp Sunshine. I would love



J'Dyka, left

to be a part of a child's positive experience here at camp and I would love to help a child experience the love and happiness I felt at camp. I also wanted to give back to camp since I received so much from it. I can't think of a better place to volunteer for a week or more. I am looking forward to being in such a positive atmosphere

and helping kids that are in a similar situation that I was in. I look forward to spreading the love I received at camp.

Katherine Delosantos

My favorite memory of camp was during my graduation year when my best friends and I sang the camp sunshine songs for the last time together around a fire as we made s'mores!

Camp Sunshine has such a special place in my heart and there is seriously no other place on earth where I feel I can truly be my most authentic self. Seeing how other volunteers made camp the place that it was for me as



Katherine, right

a camper, is something I aspire to recreate for other campers so that they can also call Camp Sunshine 'home.' I am looking forward to seeing kids grow and reach their goals! There is nothing better than seeing a camper make it to the top at rock climbing or catching their first fish or perhaps killing it at the talent show! ✨

Trained to Volunteer

Every volunteer at Camp Sunshine – whether they are a cabin counselor or activities staff or in the med lodge – is required to go through extensive, ongoing volunteer training. New volunteers must attend their first training in person.

This all-day training normally takes place in mid-May and includes a mix of new and veteran volunteers. Training is focused on ways volunteers can ensure campers feel included and safe at camp, that they are empowered to reach their goals, and that they have fun. There are also discussions for first-time volunteers on what to expect, what to bring, wellness tips, and transitioning to a counselor role – all to make the volunteer feel as prepared as possible.

Camp Sunshine also offers monthly training for volunteers on topics such as pediatric cancer, mental health issues, communication skills, problem solving scenarios and abuse prevention. After the first required training, returning volunteers must complete two trainings a year. But many attend more than the required number.

"We adapt the trainings based on where we are as community and what we think the volunteers may need," says Amy Moosbrugger, Camp Sunshine's Volunteer Manager. "And the fact that they are so well attended shows our volunteers' passion and drive towards our mission." ✨

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Colleen Austin Retires After Nearly Four Decades of Volunteering

Some might say it's the end of an Era. For 39 summers, Colleen Austin has been a fixture at Camp Sunshine. And this summer's Teen Week marked her last.

Colleen will retire in September after a long career as a nurse practitioner on the hematology oncology floor of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and will also step down as the med lodge nurse at Camp Sunshine.

"I will miss it," she says, "but it's time."

As a young nurse at what was then known as Egleston Children's Hospital, she signed on as a volunteer for the first time in 1985, when camp was held at Camp Coleman in Cleveland, Georgia. She served as a cabin counselor for three years until moving to the med lodge in 1988.

As head of the med lodge, Colleen has made sure that it was staffed with enough nurses and stocked with the necessary supplies, medicines and equipment. Besides handling the basic first aid needs of active children, the med lodge staff is now also able to administer chemotherapy treatments and blood transfusions, and oversee the intake of daily medications.

Colleen has witnessed Camp Sunshine's

growth from a one-week camp at several camps with 50 kids to a permanent camp at Camp Twin Lakes for two weeks with more than 200 campers.

She remembers the "rustic" nature of Camp Barney Medintz and the mice that shared the med lodge space with her. She remembers the pontoon boat rides on Lake Burton and watching children learn how to waterski. And she remembers arriving for the first time in 1993 at Camp Twin Lakes – a new camp that would make camp accessible for more children and had an expanded med lodge that would allow the medical staff to provide more services to campers.

Yes, she has a lot of memories of Camp Sunshine. But perhaps what she values most is the transformation she sees in the campers during just one week of camp.

"To see these kids push themselves far beyond what they thought they could do is amazing" Colleen says. "I see them blossom."

For that reason, she has always encouraged her patients to go to Camp Sunshine.

"I tell them that they have to go to camp because 'I told them so,'" she says. "And I tell them that if they end up not liking it, they



"It's breathtaking to see the difference camp makes. It's not what we do – it's what we help them do." – Colleen Austin

don't have to go back. But of course that never happens."

She also promises parents who are sending their kids to camp for the first time that after one week, they will see a completely different child.

"It's breathtaking to see the difference camp makes," she says. "It's not what *we* do – it's what we help *them* do."

For Colleen, her annual week at camp has been a way for her to recharge.

"The work we do at the hospital can be emotionally and physically draining," she says. "You can't do that every day without being able to filter that into something positive. Volunteering at Camp Sunshine has been my release. Camp is where I can make a difference."

Colleen has made a difference to thousands of campers over nearly four decades. But as she leaves, she has confidence the med lodge is in good hands.

"It is sad to be leaving," she admits, "but there are plenty of good people to take the lead. It's a well-oiled machine." ✨



Colleen (far right) with medical staff during 2023 camp.



CAMP SUNSHINE POSTCARDS

SEPTEMBER 2023

PARENT PROGRAMMING

Check out our website and social media pages as we plan to host Parent Zoom Meetings!

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Bingo and other virtual family programs have been so much fun and will continue. Watch for emails inviting you to attend.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Check out our website www.mycampsunshine.com, the newsletter, your email and our social media pages for programs coming to your area!

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4 Office Closed for Labor Day	5	6	7	8 Gwinnett Stripers Game at Coolray Field – NE Georgia families	9 Apple Picking at Hillcrest Orchards Wild Adventures – South Georgia
10 Childhood Cancer Awareness Day at the Atlanta Braves	11 Bingo Night on Zoom	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Alumni Reunion Day
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

OCTOBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1 Fall Family Photos – Camp Sunshine House	2 Bingo Night on Zoom	3	4	5	6 Fall Family Camp Weekend	7 →
8 →	9	10	11	12	13 Fall Family Camp Weekend	14 →
15 →	16	17	18	19	20 Remember the Sunshine Weekend	21 →
22 → Fall Festival – Camp Sunshine House	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



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NOVEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				2	3	4
5 Thanksgiving Seasonal Sunshine - Camp Sunshine House	6 Bingo Night on Zoom	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 Fall Teen Retreat Weekend	18 Virtual Gingerbread Party
19 Savannah Gingerbread Party	20	21	22	23 Office Closed for Thanksgiving	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

SPECIAL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER IS CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH!

40TH REUNION AT CAMP TWIN LAKES-EAST

Saturday, September 23

Camp Sunshine alumni and volunteers are invited to a 40th reunion at Camp Twin Lakes - East.

RACETRAC GIVES BACK PROGRAM FOR CAMP SUNSHINE

Throughout September, RaceTrac supports Camp Sunshine through various promotions. Coffee for a Cause Week is the 17th - 23rd, proceeds of all coffee and donut purchases benefit Camp Sunshine!

14TH ANNUAL PIRATES OF LANIER CHARITY POKER RUN

September 8-10

Since 2009 Lanier Partner's of North Georgia has hosted this annual charity event on Lake Lanier. Camp Sunshine is one of the beneficiaries.

DECEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1 Savannah Holiday Lights Coastal Georgia	2 'Into the Burrow' at the Alliance Theatre
3	4 Bingo Night on Zoom	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Office Closed for the Holidays	26	27	28	29	30
31						

FERRARI OF ATLANTA'S RIDES TO REMEMBER

Saturday, September 16

This year Rides to Remember is hosting a festival full of games, activities, and food for kids and their families! Camp Sunshine is one of the beneficiaries! Registration and information at ridestoremember.org.





CAMP SUNSHINE[®]

A ray of hope for children with cancer.[™]

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CAMP SUNSHINE POSTCARDS

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Cargill Shows it Cares by Supporting Camp Sunshine

Christine Wages' son Tyler was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 at 11 years old. Unfortunately, Tyler had a rough time during treatment and was just not himself.

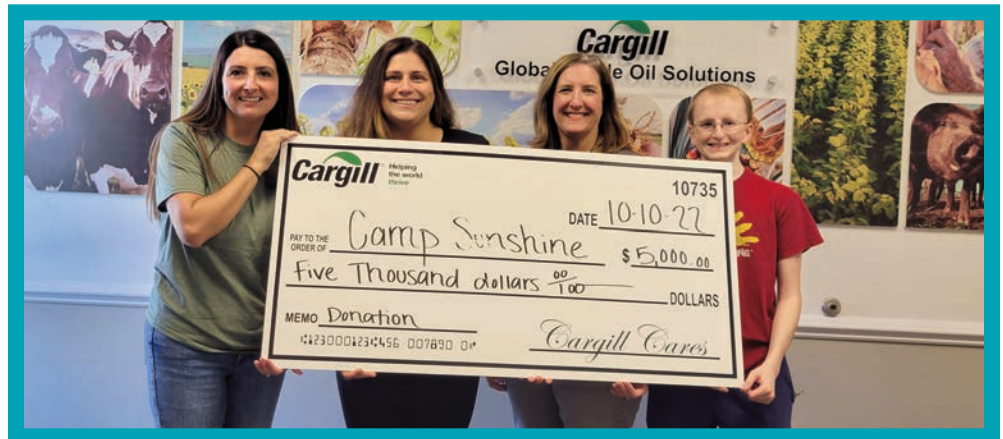
"He was crabby, unhappy and just in a dark place," Christina remembers. At his medical team's urging, Christine sent him to Camp Sunshine the next summer. She will never forget the day she picked him up.

"When he got off the bus, he was a different child," she says. "He was happy and excited and had a different outlook."

It was as if she was given a gift – and she wanted to repay that gift by supporting Camp Sunshine.

Christine works at the Gainesville, Georgia, office of Cargill, a global food manufacturer. The company has an outreach program called "Cargill Cares" in which employees can nominate organizations that they would like to support.

In nominating Camp Sunshine, Christine described the transformational impact the camp had on Tyler. As a result, Cargill's Gainesville office has given financial support to the organization for the last ten years.



Cargill presents a check to Camp Sunshine last October. From left: Tiffany Hudgins, Alicia Brady, and Christine and Tyler Wages

"We really try to focus on organizations that our members are passionate about," says Jaqueline Molina, who is on the Cargill Cares selection committee. "Some Cargill employees have had a personal connection with Camp Sunshine and that means a lot to us. It's a full circle moment when we get to help an organization that has helped one of our own. It's our way of giving back."

Christine has also gotten the employees involved in helping Camp Sunshine. She brings

all the supplies to make the camp's signature friendship bracelets to the office and employees string together the beads and fishing lures in their spare time. She estimates that before the pandemic, Cargill employees regularly supplied between 500 – 700 bracelets to the camp.

She is grateful for all the support.

"It means a lot to me that my company will support an organization that has had such an impact on my son and my family," Christine says. *