

**Seth's Story** From camper to counselor, Seth shares his story of determination and hope, and unveils his "claim to fame." **Page 3**

**Par Excellent!** Golfers tee it up for Camp Sunshine in a variety of community tournaments. **Page 4**

**A Sterling Advocate** Tricia Benson has spent 25 years supporting Camp Sunshine and advocating for childhood cancer initiatives. **Page 8**

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

# POSTCARDS

## Camp Sunshine's New Initiative Reaches Families Across the State

*As Camp Sunshine celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, founder Dorothy Jordan remarked, "It is vitally important that we continue to reach out to children and families in all corners of the state. I feel very strongly about the difference Camp Sunshine can make in a child's life, and I want to be sure we are reaching as many children as possible."*

**T**raditionally, Camp Sunshine's programs have been limited geographically. But as we begin our next quarter-century, Camp Sunshine is responding to Dorothy's challenge with a new initiative, reaching out

to more families in more communities with more programs than ever before. In 2007, more than 600 family members participated in statewide outreach programs, more than double the previous year's number.

"It is vital that we continue to grow and extend our reach," said Executive Director Sally Hale. "Our goal is for every family who can benefit from Camp Sunshine, regardless of where they live in Georgia, to have access to our programs. We want them to realize they are not alone in their struggle with childhood cancer."

Here are the stories of two families who live far from metro Atlanta, but whose lives have been touched by Camp Sunshine's warming rays.

### *Sarah: Making Friends Along the Way*

The sixty-five mile drive from Calhoun to Atlanta can be long and tiring, especially for a family with a young child fighting a daunting medical condition. That's why Susan, mother of 8-year-old Sarah, is thrilled to see more Camp Sunshine programs available in Georgia's northwest corner.

"We've attended Camp Sunshine Nights at the Rome Braves game and the Booth Western Art Museum trip to Cartersville," Susan said. "We had to miss Bowling Night in Rome, but we've got the Tennessee Valley train ride here for us, too. We enjoy the events, but the best part is getting to see the friends you've made along the way."

Sarah was diagnosed in February of 2005 with Stage IV neuroblastoma. She had been complaining of aches and pains, but a series of diagnostic tests had not revealed the cause. "We were visiting in Waycross, Georgia for President's Day weekend," her mother recalled. "Sarah went to walk across the park, and she literally could not do it. The deterioration of her hip was that bad."

For most of her battle, Sarah has received her cancer treatment at T.C. Thompson Children's Hospital in Chattanooga. The family learned about Camp Sunshine during a stay at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. "We attended Family Camp in Spring of 2006 and we went to



Sarah having fun at Booth Western Art Museum



## DEAR CAMP SUNSHINE FRIENDS,

November 4th was a glorious fall afternoon filled with blue skies and abundant Sunshine with a capital S. More than 200 campers, alumni, volunteers, supporters and friends gathered for the 25th Camp Sunshine Reunion at the Camp Sunshine House in Decatur. It was a day of delicious barbecue and delightful music by our dear friends Banks Burgess and Paul Shane (Banks & Shane). We dedicated our new pavilion in honor of long-time volunteer and supporter Billy Schultz, who contributed his time and talent (and building materials) to make the pavilion happen.



A true highlight of the day was the naming of our second building at Camp Sunshine House in honor of our incredible Executive Director Sally Hale. Sally had no idea of the Board's decision to recognize her years of service in this way, and everyone delighted in her stunned reaction and humble response. Twenty-five years ago, Sally was one of the first people I approached with the idea of a summer camp for children with cancer. With her extraordinary combination of compassion, skill, insight and intellect, Sally grasped the vision from day one. She has worked tirelessly to make Camp Sunshine the shining light it is today.



The new building will provide us with more office space and meeting rooms to serve even more children and their families. The new pavilion will give us a cozy, outdoor gathering space. I love the fire pit. It will be a place where stories are shared, and Camp Sunshine is all about stories as this issue of *Postcards* attests. I hope you find these stories helpful and uplifting, and I also hope that you and your family create cherished stories of your own this holiday season.

– Dorothy Jordan, Founder



## MOVING?

Have you moved recently? Are you about to move?  
Do we need to change your mailing address? Contact  
[Chanteasea@mycampsunshine.com](mailto:Chanteasea@mycampsunshine.com)  
or call 404-325-7979, ext. 10.







## THEN &amp; NOW

## Seth's Story

**Even though Seth is shifting his attention this fall to medical school applications, memories of summer camp 2007 – his first as a volunteer counselor – warm his heart. “Camp was great. It’s incredibly rewarding to be with the kids,” he said. “I think the best thing was sitting back and watching them just be kids.”**

Seth knows first-hand the importance of giving kids with cancer the chance to experience normal, everyday activities, including summer camp. Now 21 and a microbiology major at the University of Georgia, Seth was 7 years old, when he was beset with a series of strep throats and began snoring abnormally loudly. A consult with an ear, nose and throat specialist led to a difficult diagnosis: Seth had a malignant tumor, a rhabdomyosarcoma, on the base of his tongue.

In Seth's case, pediatric oncologists at Egleston (now Children's Healthcare of Atlanta) decided swiftly on a protocol combining chemotherapy, radiation therapy and several surgeries to remove the tumor and eradicate the cancer. Seth had to have one-third of his tongue removed and was not supposed to be able to talk for some time. But he was determined to return to his normal routines. His first meal after surgery was spicy Mexican food. Working earnestly with speech therapists, Seth regained his speech.

At Egleston, Seth first learned about Camp Sunshine, and when he turned 8, he was ready to go. “It was my first time going to an overnight camp, and I really didn't know what to expect,” he recalled. Once there, the counselors and other campers made Seth feel at home.

Seth returned to camp every summer for the next 10 years. A favorite story from early camp years is also his “claim to fame.” “I had this ability to burp super loud. I was 9 years old, and my counselor Michael Siegel convinced me to go up on stage with him at the Camp Sunshine Talent Show and show off my talent,” he said, laughing. “I got up on stage...and I burped. There was dead silence and then there was this tremendous laughter. People still come up to me and talk about that night.”

Being the stuff of camp legend, Seth became a

counselor-in-training at age 19. This summer – the 25th anniversary of Camp Sunshine – Seth was a first-year counselor to 10-year-old boys in Cabin #14. “Camp Sunshine helps kids build a sense of independence. That's exactly what kids with cancer need at a time when they are trying so hard not to be wholly dependent on others,” he said.

Seth thinks back to a young girl from his childhood who also attended Camp Sunshine. Growing up in the same community, Seth knew her to be quiet and withdrawn: “But when I saw her at camp, she was like a flower that bloomed. She wasn't afraid or inhibited any more – she could be herself. That's what Camp Sunshine is all about.”

At UGA, Seth participates in many student activities and service projects, including Rays of Light, a group he helped organize to fill care baskets for children with cancer. He also has served on a recycling committee which raises funds for Habitat for Humanity. In his spare time, Seth enjoys hiking and camping. He has completed much of the Appalachian Trail in Georgia and would like to tackle more of it in the years ahead. He is planning a trip with friends to the Grand Canyon.

As he begins his senior year, Seth foresees a future in medicine: “I'm hoping to pursue a career in pediatrics or perhaps radiation oncology.” He also anticipates many more years of spreading the Sunshine: “I owe Camp Sunshine a lot for where I am in my life.” ✨



**“CAMP SUNSHINE  
IS LIKE A LITTLE  
BIT OF HEAVEN.”**

– Seth

## COMMUNITY PARTNER SALUTE

## Teeing It Up for Camp Sunshine

At Camp Sunshine, we are continually awed by the number of ways community friends team up to help support our programs. For example, every autumn hundreds of golfers take to the links in tournaments designed to raise funds for – and awareness of – Camp Sunshine.

While each tournament is unique, they share common threads. Each honors the memory of a young person whose life was interrupted by cancer; and in every case, tournament organizers have been touched by Camp Sunshine's mission.

Camp Sunshine salutes the many hard-working and dedicated organizers, families, volunteers and sponsors who make these tournaments possible. Collectively, their efforts raise significant funds for our programs. Moreover, these events introduce countless new friends to Camp Sunshine.

golf course?" The only question mark was a beneficiary. When one of his 7-year-old Sunday school students told him about a sibling with cancer, Ben knew Camp Sunshine was the answer. Eighty players participated. Ben wants to see more: "My vision is for this to become one of the largest charitable golf tournaments in Atlanta."

### ***Branan Elliott Golf Tournament – Lane Creek Golf Club***

Branan loved soccer, golf, his Kappa Alpha fraternity brothers, and most importantly, the University of Georgia. Even a brain tumor diagnosis in 2001 could not keep Branan from positively influencing others. "He had a special spark," said his mother Tish. When Branan passed away, his family and friends organized a charitable golf tournament in his memory. This year's was the 6th Annual outing. The Elliotts support Camp Sunshine, partly due to a personal relationship with the Thrash family – Camp Sunshine volunteers Mo and Jane, and their daughter Brinsley, Camp Sunshine Program Director – and partly due to camp's mission. "Brannon would be very happy that his friends are remembering him by helping children," said his father Raleigh.

### ***Brad Gambrell Golf Tournament – The Reunion Golf Club***

Brad's battle against non-Hodgkin's lymphoma inspired all who knew him. Diagnosed at age 15, Brad fought the disease for three years, but died in 2003. His parents, Perry and Lenora, and friends wanted to honor Brad's memory in a manner that would touch people's lives. "Brad liked golf and he loved Camp Sunshine," Perry said. "Put the two together and the golf tournament was begun." This fall marked the tournament's fourth anniversary. Brad participated in many Camp Sunshine programs, including

summer camp, Outward Bound and the teen trip to Washington, DC. His family wants other children to have these experiences. The tournament, Perry said, is "very exciting and very tiring...but it is truly a labor of love."



### ***The Scotty Classic Golf Tournament – Atlanta National, White Columns, Crooked Creek, The Trophy Club***

One of Atlanta's largest charitable events, the Scotty Classic honors the memory of Scott Mishkin, a young business man and father who died in 2001 of a rare form of cancer most often found in pediatric patients. Today, the Scotty attracts hundreds of golfers playing on multiple courses. Proceeds benefit not only Camp Sunshine, but also the Atlanta Ronald McDonald House and the Aflac Cancer Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. "Because his cancer was pediatric in nature, Scott's peers in a sense became the kids around him who were also battling this disease," said Scott's friend and board member David B. Gheesling. "It was tough for Scott to watch that. But he also believed that pediatric cancer patients are the most positive people on the planet. He would want to support these organizations."

*Continued on the Next Page*



### ***College Football Pigskin Charity Classic – The Georgia Club***

Why not combine the South's love of football, passion for golf and caring attitude toward children? Organizer Ben Nobles liked the idea of a charitable golf tournament to coincide with the start of the college football season: "The pageantry that exists between rival schools is so much fun. So why not recreate that on the

### ***Sam Robb Golf Tournament – Pinelsle Golf Club***

Sam, who died this past summer at age 20, loved Camp Sunshine. Not only did he attend camp after being diagnosed with bone cancer at age 15, he also was planning to volunteer at camp this year. "If you knew Sam, you knew he touched lives deeply," said family friend Jodie Richey. Friends wanted to "do something," but were not sure how Sam's family would feel about a memorial golf tournament so closely following his passing. "The Robb family is so strong, they jumped on the idea and gave it their blessing," Jodie said. With help from Missi Burgess, Director of Golf at Pinelsle, and her husband Banks

(of Banks & Shane), volunteers organized 25 foursomes and secured numerous sponsors. "Sam lived with extra doses of life," said Jodie. "He would have loved this."

### ***Chris Young Golf Tournament – Cedar Lake Golf Club***

An aspiring football player who stood just over six feet tall and weighed 235 pounds, Chris was nicknamed the Gentle Giant. He wore a size 15 1/2 shoe and had a heart big enough to take the younger, smaller players under his wing. In 2002, Chris was diagnosed with an advanced leukemia which took his life. "As a parent losing a child, I knew I had to make this right somehow," said his father Charlie. "I

wanted him to be remembered by somehow helping others." Loved ones suggested a memorial golf tournament. A friend told Charlie about the mission and programs of Camp Sunshine. "If Chris had had the opportunity to go to camp, he would have loved it," Charlie said. "He would be very proud and honored to be helping the kids at Camp Sunshine." ★

***Do you have an interest in participating in a tournament next year? Or maybe you have your own idea for a community event to benefit Camp Sunshine. Tenise Fernandez, Director of Special Events, can help. Call her at 404-325-7979, ext. 16, or e-mail [tenise@mycampsunshine.com](mailto:tenise@mycampsunshine.com).***

## **Camp Sunshine's New Initiative Reaches Families Across the State, continued from page 1**

the Big Apple Circus, too," Susan said. "Not living close to Atlanta, it is hard to get to as many programs as we'd like."

The more Camp Sunshine programs become available closer to home, the more Sarah and her family like it. "The programs offer a respite," Susan said, "A time away from it all...a time to be a family...and a time to be with other families who truly understand."

### ***Matt: Making Connections...and the News***

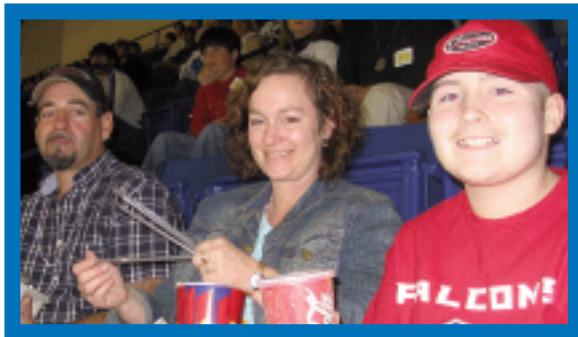
One May afternoon in 2006, Matt came home from school with nausea, vomiting and a headache. "He laid down to rest," his mother Michelle remembered. "But when he looked up at me and said *Mom I see two of you*, I knew there was something terribly wrong."

Matt was transported from his hometown of Columbus to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) at Scottish Rite. He spent the next three weeks there, beginning a treatment protocol of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Matt celebrated one year off therapy on October 28.

The family learned about Camp Sunshine during their stay at CHOA. "Matt was diagnosed in May and summer camp was in June," his mother said. "We were still in shock – it was all too new – and we just weren't ready for camp. Once we were finished in Atlanta, we just wanted to go home." The family tucked away the idea of Camp Sunshine for a later time.

That time came when Matt read in the *Columbus Ledger* about Camp Sunshine Night at the Columbus Cottonmouths ice hockey game. "We met the Camp Sunshine folks at the game. It was fantastic," Michelle said.

Now the family participates in as many Camp Sunshine programs as possible. Matt attended summer camp this year and enjoyed Camp Sunshine Night at the Columbus Catfish baseball game. "Channel 9 News was there, and Matt and I were interviewed. He absolutely loved it," Michelle said. They cherish the friendships with other Camp Sunshine families. "We have met lots of people from this part of the state," Michelle said. "It's a good, positive thing to be around others who have been through similar challenges." ★



Matt Conner and his family at the Columbus Cottonmouths Hockey game.

**A calendar of Camp Sunshine statewide events appears in every issue of Postcards, which is published three times per year. Calendar listings also are updated regularly on-line at [www.mycampsunshine.com](http://www.mycampsunshine.com). Be sure to check often – you won't want to miss a thing!**



# CAMP SUNSHINE POSTCARDS

For any House program, we ask that you RSVP to 404-325-7979

## JANUARY 2008

### ONGOING PROGRAMS

#### FAMILY NIGHT

1st and 3rd Tuesday each month

5:30-6:30 PM Dinner

6:30-7:30 PM Group Meeting

Call to RSVP

Meet and share dinner with others in similar situations. Then participate in professionally facilitated groups to discuss pertinent topics. Parents meet together; children meet with other children and childcare is provided for children under age 5.

#### TEEN GROUP

2nd and 4th Thursday each month

5:30-6:30 PM Dinner

6:30-7:30 PM Program

Call to RSVP

For 13- to 18-year-olds. Meet, hang out and get support from other teens who also have or had cancer. For those who are on treatment or were diagnosed as a teen. Dinner is followed by discussion or activity.

#### YOUNG ADULT GROUP

3rd Thursday each month

5:30-6:30 PM Dinner

6:30-7:30 PM Program

Call to RSVP

For 18- to 23-year-olds who are currently on treatment. Dinner is followed by discussion or educational topic of interest.

### SPA SYDELL NIGHT AT CAMP SUNSHINE

2nd Monday each month

6:00-8:00 PM

Come have dinner and be pampered by the talented professionals from Spa Sydell.

### PRESCHOOL MUSIC CLASS

2nd and 4th Thursday each month

10:30 AM-12:30 PM

Join us for lunch, music class and a fun activity. For campers birth - 6 years old and their preschool age siblings.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	11	12 School Age Overnight →
13 →	14 Spa Sydell Night Family Night in Central Georgia	15 Family Night	16	17 Young Adult Group	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## FEBRUARY 2008

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2 → Teen Winter Dance/Lock In Savannah Family Program
3 →	4	5 Family Night	6	7 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	8	9
10 Big Apple Circus	11 Family Night in Central Georgia	12	13	14 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	15	16
17	18 Spa Sydell Night	19 Family Night	20	21 Young Adult Group	22	23
24	25	26 Seasonal Sunshine	27	28 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	29 Teen Retreat →	





For any House program, we ask that you RSVP to 404-325-7979

## MARCH 2008

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					Teen Retreat →	1
2 →	3	4 Family Night	5	6 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	7	8
9	10 Spa Sydeell Night Family Night in Central Georgia	11	12	13 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	14	15 Off Treatment Workshop Spring Fling
16	17	18 Family Night	19	20 Young Adult Group	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	28 Family Camp at Camp Twin Lakes →	29
30 →	31					

### SAVE THESE DATES

May 9-11, 2008  
Young Adult Retreat Weekend

May 17, 2008  
Staff Orientation

June 15-21, 2008  
Summer Camp – Teen Week

June 22-28, 2008  
Summer Camp – Junior Week

August 22-24, 2008  
Sibling Camp

### THE NEXT STEPS: OFF TREATMENT WORKSHOP

March 15, 2008  
10 AM- 2 PM (lunch provided)  
Camp Sunshine House  
Topics addressed at this educational program will include:

- Medical Follow-up
- Cognitive Late Effects
- Family Life After Treatment
- Helping Your Child Transition

## APRIL 2008

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1 Family Night	2	3 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	4 Family Camp at Camp Twin Lakes →	5
6 → Remember the Sunshine Day	7	8	9	10 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	11 Savannah Family Camp at Camp Twin Lakes →	12 NW Regional Family Program
13 →	14 Spa Sydeell Night Family Night in Central Georgia	15 Family Night	16	17 Young Adult Group	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group	25	26 NE Regional Family Program
27	28	29	30 Washington, DC Trip for Teens →			

### INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

This program provides support and counseling for children and teens regarding illness-related issues. Call Missi Hicks, CCLS, LPC, RPT, at 404-325-7979 for details.

### REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Camp Sunshine is expanding its regional programming in 2008. We will now provide programs in 8 regions throughout the state in addition to programs in the Metro Atlanta area. Check out our website, newsletter and your mail for programs coming to your area.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## Tricia Benson: 25 Years of Commitment

*Camp Sunshine is celebrating its silver anniversary with profiles of volunteers who have been with us from the beginning.*



Twenty-five summers ago, Tricia was a new pediatric nurse on the inpatient cancer unit of Egleston Children's Hospital (now Children's Healthcare of Atlanta), when she first heard about plans for a summer camp for kids with cancer. From the start, Tricia embraced it. "At the bedside, you see so much of the devastation of the disease and the tremendous impact on the family," she said. "Camp was a place to have fun—to focus on the child, not the cancer."

Every summer, Tricia volunteered to help give kids a normal week of camp fun. In 2000, she stepped up her commitment by accepting a staff position as Program Director, a post she held for five years. In 2006, Tricia left Atlanta for Washington, DC, where she works as Director of External Affairs for CureSearch National Childhood Cancer Foundation. Tricia is responsible for developing and implementing an effective legislative strategy

to build awareness in Congress about childhood cancer. She also works to secure funding for childhood cancer research. She spends much of her time on Capitol Hill and has been involved in planning Reach the Day: Conquer Childhood Cancer, a national day of awareness for advocates in the childhood cancer community.



"Twenty-five years have brought a lot of growth and change," Tricia said. "In 1983, the survival rate was about 50 percent for childhood cancer, and now it is 78 percent overall. We have many volunteers today who are former campers, and this is very heart-

ening. What hasn't changed is how hard it is when a camper dies. You have lost a loved one, and you grieve because of the depth of the relationships built during Camp Sunshine programs."

Tricia helped facilitate Camp Sunshine's expansion to include year-round programs for the whole family and played a major role in the planning, design and building of Camp Sunshine House. "Cancer affects the whole family—thus, our programming needed to expand to include and support the whole family," she said. "Camp Sunshine has been fortunate to have a clear mission, a strategic plan, a strong volunteer base and a giving Board of Directors. All of these factors have made it possible to provide a wide range of services for children with cancer and their families. To know these children and their families has been a life-changing gift for me personally. It drives me every day to try to make a difference." \*



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