

Gift of Sunshine

A gift to Camp Sunshine is a meaningful way to send holiday wishes to friends and loved ones. **Page 2**

Discovering the Magic

Jay overcame bouts of homesickness and grew to love Camp Sunshine, a commitment he continues to this day. Read his "Then & Now" profile. **Page 3**

Perfect Pick

For Camp Sunshine preschoolers and their families, Hillcrest Apple Orchards is a delicious and delightful place for a fall outing. **Page 8**

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



POSTCARDS

Family Camp Lets the Sunshine In



FAMILY FOCUS

In addition to Family Camp Weekends, Camp Sunshine offers programs throughout the year for the whole family:

- * Family Night
- * Remember the Sunshine
- * Spa Sydell Night
- * Fall Festival
- * Regional Activities
- * Holiday Party
- * Special Events

Check the calendar in this issue as well as our website for details.

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, the whole family's world turns upside down. Childhood cancer changes lives, reshapes relationships and alters forever a family's definition of normal. Held in spring and fall, Camp Sunshine's Family Camp Weekend gives families a much needed respite. Family members can participate in fun camp activities, including games, sports, art & crafts, tennis, fishing and massage therapy. Moreover, they can step away from the medical environment and interact with others who understand the challenges of caring for a child with cancer. Family Camp lets a family be just that... a family. Here, families share their stories in hopes that others will experience the sunshine of Family Camp.

Kylie's Family

For the Seitz family of Forsyth, the fun of fall Family Camp was a far cry from where they were one year ago. That was when daughter Kylie, then 4 years old, started having pain in her right leg while playing fall soccer. One afternoon, Kylie started running a fever and could not walk on the leg. X-rays convinced her doctor that she needed to be at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. A series of tests, including a bone biopsy, revealed Ewing's sarcoma.

Kylie began a chemotherapy regimen of five drugs. "She would

spend two days in the hospital followed by 12 days at home, where she required 10 days of shots," her mother Gini recalled. "She did this 14 times." In April



"AT FAMILY CAMP, THEY DON'T FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM; THEY FOCUS ON MAKING SURE THAT EVERYONE HAS A GOOD TIME."

– Gini Seitz

of 2009, Kylie underwent limb salvage surgery, having her right femur replaced with a titanium rod. She has been off chemotherapy since June. With the help of physical therapy twice a week, Kylie is now walking with crutches and doing well.

Gini and her husband Dave have three daughters: Kylie, now 6; Cadi, 10; and Halie, 12. "There was so much going on last year that as a family we feel we missed Thanksgiving,



DEAR CAMP SUNSHINE FRIENDS,

Childhood cancer does not affect the child alone. Cancer's impact is felt by every family member. As attention is understandably riveted on the child with illness and family routines go by the wayside, relationships can become strained. Even the strongest bonds can become stressed.

That is why Camp Sunshine serves the entire family. Our Mission Statement says that Camp Sunshine enriches the lives of children with cancer and their families. Our philosophy statement spells out our goal to provide children and their families with opportunities for personal growth regardless of the outcome of the disease. Summer Camp may be our largest program, but it is only one of many. In fact, when Camp Sunshine began to expand its programming beyond summer camp, the first addition was Family Camp Weekend introduced in 1987.

This *Postcards* is all about families. We are deeply grateful to Kaya's family and Kylie's family for sharing their own personal reflections on Family Camp Weekend. Like many others, these families were overwhelmed by their child's cancer diagnosis and unsure whether a camp

program could help. After experiencing the Sunshine for themselves, they are eloquent advocates, encouraging others to participate. We extend a special thank-you to the Murphys who so powerfully express what our Remember the Sunshine program can mean to a family dealing with the loss of a child.

I first met Jay, the focus of our "Then & Now" story, at Family Camp many years ago. I remember his homesickness at his first Summer Camp. Like many first-time campers, Jay was uncertain, but he grew to love Camp Sunshine and formed life-long friendships. As an adult, Jay has expanded the Camp Sunshine family, introducing his wife Katie to the fun, fellowship and fulfillment of being a Camp Sunshine volunteer.

Our long-time Community Partner, Hillcrest Apple Orchards in Ellijay shares our family focus. Every fall, this popular site for family fun welcomes our preschoolers and their families for a day of outdoor fun. Owner Janice Hale (a kindred spirit, but no relation) and her staff go the extra mile to make the annual Apple Orchard outing a terrific day, and we are deeply grateful for their hospitality.

The holidays are a time to reflect on the ties that bind. As you review your gift list this year, consider a gift that will honor the special people in your life and have lasting significance to our campers and their families. Consider a gift to Camp Sunshine. To the entire Camp Sunshine family, I extend all good wishes for safe and healthy holidays.

-Sally Hale, Executive Director

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

Give a Gift of Sunshine This Holiday Season

Camp Sunshine can help make the holiday season even more meaningful for you and the people you care about. Honor your friends, family and business associates with a gift to Camp Sunshine, supporting year-round programming for children with cancer. We can help you craft a special message to let someone special know that you've made a gift in his or her name. Give us the names and addresses of those you wish to honor, and we can even mail personalized Camp Sunshine holiday acknowledgment cards for you, if you'd like. Your gift will give joy and hope to a child with cancer this holiday season. For details, contact Lindsey Monroe at 404.325.7979.



THEN & NOW

Jay's Story

Even at age 27, Jay is a self-described homebody. Maybe that explains his bouts of homesickness when he first attended Camp Sunshine as a child. "If you ask some of the older staff, they'll tell you – I would pitch a fit when I got there, claiming homesickness and anything else I could think of," he recalled.

After a camp session or two, Jay made friends – dear, lifelong friends. Throughout 17 years, first as a camper and now as a counselor, he has never missed summer camp. Jay shares this reminiscence for a reason: "Some kids love camp from the very beginning; but for others, it takes a little time. Either way, it's OK. I'd tell parents just to encourage their kids to go. Camp can be life-changing."

A financial specialist with Wachovia, Jay was 10 years old when he was diagnosed with lymphoblastic lymphoma. A tumor in his chest was causing his lungs to fill with fluid. "I was having a hard time breathing, and I had a funny cough that wouldn't go away," he said. When doctors made the cancer diagnosis, Jay began 18 months of chemotherapy. "It was a scary time, but everyone around me had a very positive attitude, so I did, too," Jay said. Battling childhood cancer, he said, changed his perspective on life: "It forced me to be strong. I had to learn to take it one step at a time and not to stress out about the small stuff."

Early homesickness aside, Jay grew to love Camp Sunshine. "Summer camp was fun," he said, "but for me, some of the coolest experiences were the teen trips." His favorite was the Outward Bound experience in Colorado. "It was a way of teaching us independence – it was great."

Jay graduated from Harrison High School in Kennesaw in 2000 and attended Berry College in Rome, where he received a bachelor's degree in 2004. "I loved every minute of it," he

commented. One reason for his enthusiasm: it was there he met his wife Katie.

After he and Katie were married, she became a volunteer counselor as well. They volunteer throughout the year for Family Camp and Teen Retreat. For Junior Week, Jay is counselor to the boys, ages 10-12, in Cabin 15; Katie is counselor to the girls, ages 7-9, in Cabin 4. "This was my 7th summer as a counselor, and I don't plan on stopping any time soon," Jay said. "I'd do everything in my power to get there."

In his spare time, Jay is a big baseball fan and enjoys going to Braves games. He also likes to play guitar and piano, and sometimes fills in as song leader at camp events. Katie, a professional photographer, often donates her photography skills at camp

happenings. Their beagle Peter is, according to Katie, the best dog in the world.

"Without sounding cliché, there is something magical about Camp Sunshine," Jay said. "First of all, it's important for the kids. I understand where I was in my development when camp became a part of my life. It was important for me, for my development and for my healing, and I want to give back for everything I received. On a more selfish level, I love the kids and I have a blast at camp. There aren't many places where I can go and get to play all day!" ✨



Jay's advice for parents of homebodies: "Try Family Camp first. It is a welcoming group, and the whole family can enjoy camp and get comfortable with it together."



Remembering the Sunshine

For a family who has lost a child to cancer, Camp Sunshine reaches out with Remember the Sunshine programs for bereaved families who have participated in past Camp Sunshine events. These programs offer an opportunity to revisit a place where wonderful memories were made and to connect with other families.

The Murphy family of Suwanee lost their "Sunshine" in 2005, when their youngest son Michael died of osteosarcoma at age 19. "Michael was born prematurely and weighed three pounds at birth," his father Kimm recalled. "He came into the world tough; he came into the world fighting." Yet Michael had a kindness about him and an unforgettable smile that, along with his red hair, lit up his whole face. "People used to say they never saw a child smile as much as Michael," his father said. "We nicknamed him Sunshine."

In June of 2003, Michael began complaining of pain in his knee. At first he was treated for a sprain, but the pain didn't go away. Further testing revealed the cancerous growth. Michel battled hard. His mother Jan remembers Michael's surgery to replace the bone in his leg with a titanium rod: "The second day after surgery, Michael was up and walking; he didn't like being down for very long."

Michael attended Summer Camp and the Teen Trip to Washington, D.C. "He loved Camp Sunshine; he loved every minute of it," his mother said. "It was a happy part of his journey," his father added. "He got to be with friends, not in the hospital setting, but in a serene, safe and social atmosphere. It was something for him to look



forward to, where he could relax and be himself. It was a very happy place for him."

Since Michael's passing, the Murphy family, including his parents and two older siblings, Michelle and Phillip, have participated in Camp Sunshine's bereavement programs. The annual fall Remember the Sunshine Weekend is particularly meaningful to them. "It is a time to be with other families who have gone through what you have gone through, who have suffered the same kind of loss you suffered," Kimm said. "In the everyday world, unless someone has lost a child or gone the extra mile with a family who has, people have a hard time understanding what you have been through. But camp is safe place. You can stand up and laugh or you can stand up and cry, and everyone understands. There is a oneness and connection at camp unlike anyplace else."

Even Michael's little niece Isabella, whom he loved, loves Camp Sunshine. "We love fishing, arts and crafts, and just walking in nature," Jan said. "We love walking where Michael walked and knowing all the kids and his friend were with him. Everybody handles loss differently, but for our family, Camp Sunshine is such a blessing."

Camp Sunshine offers Remember the Sunshine Family Nights, Weekends and Days. Call 404-325-7979 to learn more. *



Help Send a Camp Sunshine Family to the Circus

This year February 14th is more than Valentine's Day – it's the sixth annual Camp Sunshine Day at the Big Apple Circus! Be a sweetheart and help send a Camp Sunshine family to this spectacular show. Thanks to the generosity of our Presenting Sponsor, the Coca-Cola Company, all proceeds from the afternoon show will benefit camp programs. Last year, 1,250 people attended, including 169 Camp Sunshine families, and \$98,000 was raised.

Sponsorship opportunities are as follows:

Ringmaster	\$15,000	Acrobatic	\$ 2,500
Opening Act	\$10,000	High Wire	\$ 1,000
Center Ring	\$ 5,000		

Full- and half-page program ads are also available for \$500 and \$250 respectively. Call 404-325-7979 for details.

Family Camp Lets the Sunshine In, **Continued from page 1**

Christmas and even Kylie's birthday," Gini said. One bright spot was the family's introduction to Camp Sunshine programs. "Our first activity was Spa Sydell Night," Gini said. "We loved it – even Cadi, who is not a girlie-girl. She loved the massage!"

Sibling Camp for Cadi and Halie came next. "The girls were hesitant about going," their mother noted. "Halie was disappointed because she was missing softball, and Cadi wasn't sure about going at all. But they both loved it, because the focus was all about them. They talked for a whole week about how great it was." When it was time for Family Camp, all five Seitzes were ready for some sunshine.

"It was a beautiful weekend; we all loved it," Gini said. The family's favorite activities included fishing in the lake, painting a gourd with everyone's handprints on it and connecting with other families. The older girls enjoyed playing dodge ball with their dad, and Kylie liked decorating cookies and candy apples. "Mostly we loved the chance to reestablish ourselves as a family and reconnect with one another," Gini said. "We had not been on a vacation for over a year and a half; this was a vacation for us." Asked if she would recommend Family Camp to others, she answered in a word: "Absolutely!"

Kaya's Family

The first time 15-year-old Kaya Easton and her family participated in Family Camp, it rained all weekend. "It didn't matter; camp was just perfect," recalled Kaya's mother, Nandi Ashley. "Camp Sunshine is, literally, a camp of sunshine. There was so much sunshine among ourselves that the weather didn't make any difference."

Family Camp, she said, was "exactly the kind of positive distraction" the family needed following Kaya's diagnosis of and treatment for Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The family's journey began in

"JUST GO! TRY IT! HAVE AN OPEN MIND!"

Family Camp gives you hope and peace. If only for a moment, it takes your mind off what is going on and you know you are not alone."

– Nandi Ashley

December of 2008. Kaya was rubbing ointment on her skin to treat a bout of eczema, when her mother noticed a lump on Kaya's neck. On Christmas Eve,

Kaya had a CAT scan. More diagnostics followed. On her 15th birthday on January 13, the family learned that Kaya had cancer.

Kaya was hospitalized and began chemotherapy. It was during one of Kaya's hospitalizations that Nandi's younger daughter Imani and her husband Tracy first met Michele Rothstein, Camp Sunshine Program Director. "I wouldn't leave Kaya's side, so I didn't meet Michele at first. But Imani and Tracy spoke very highly of her and what she told them about Camp Sunshine."

Even after meeting Michele, Nandi was hesitant about attending a camp program. "As a family, we were kind of in seclusion," she commented, "and I was feeling so alone. I kept asking why us?, and I didn't think anyone would understand what our family was going through." Eventually, they decided to give Family Camp a try. "Family Camp did it for us – it was a turning point and gave us hope and courage," Nandi said. "We knew then that we were not alone. The support system provided by Camp Sunshine was, and is, absolutely awesome!"

Family Camp "brought us to the reality that yes, you can live life with cancer," Nandi said. Kaya completed treatment in May, and her three-month checkup showed her cancer to be in remission. Since attending their first Family Camp Weekend, the family has taken part in many Camp Sunshine programs, including Teen Summer Camp for Kaya and Sibling Camp for Imani. The whole family returned this fall for Family Camp Weekend. This time the weather was beautiful.

"Childhood cancer affects any sense of normalcy you have as a family. Normalcy goes out the window," Kaya's mother said. "But at Camp Sunshine, you learn that you can take control of the situation and not let the situation take control of you." *



CAMP SUNSHINE POSTCARDS

ONGOING PROGRAMS

FAMILY NIGHT

3rd Sunday of each month.

5:30 – 6:20 Dinner

6:30 – 7:20 Groups meetings

Call to RSVP

Meet and share dinner with other families affected by pediatric cancer. Following dinner, groups will meet to share, encourage, support and learn from others in similar situations. Parents will meet, teens will gather and school age children will get together. Childcare is available for those under 5.

TEEN GROUP

TEEN GROUP NORTH meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month in Johns Creek from 6:00 – 7:30 PM

TEEN GROUP meets the 4th Thursday of each month at Camp Sunshine House from 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Call to RSVP

For 13 – 18 year olds who are currently on treatment or were diagnosed as a teen. Meet, hang out and get support from other teens who have or have had cancer. Dinner is served at all groups.

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 Wednesday each month

12:15 PM – 1:45 PM

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

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

JANUARY 2010

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Eglston	7 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	8	9
10	11 Spa Sydell Night	12 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Scottish Rite	13 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group North	14	15 Teen Winter Dance/Lock In →	16
17 Family Night	18 Office Closed	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Pre-School Music Class	28 Teen Group	29 School Age Overnight →	30
31						

FEBRUARY 2010

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Eglston	4 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	5	6
7	8 Spa Sydell Night	9 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Scottish Rite	10 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group North	11	12	13
14 Big Apple Circus	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Family Night	22	23 Seasonal Sunshine	24 Pre-School Music Class	25 Teen Group	26	27
28						



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

MARCH 2010

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Eglston	4 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	5	6
7	8 Spa Sydell Night	9 Sunshine 2 U at Aflac Cancer Center/Scottish Rite	10 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group North	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Family Night	22	23	24 Pre-School Music Class	25 Teen Group	26 Teen Retreat at Camp Twin Lakes	27 Spring Fling
28	29	30	31			

SAVE THESE DATES

May 15, 2010
Staff Orientation

June 13-19, 2010
Summer Camp – Teen Week

June 20-25, 2010
Summer Camp – Junior Week

August 20-22, 2010
Sibling Camp

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Camp Sunshine offers support and counseling for children, teens and young adults ages 5 - 23 regarding illness-related issues and concerns. Call Terri Sexton, LMSW, at 404-325-7979 for details.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Camp Sunshine continues to provide regional programming. We will now provide programs in all areas of the state in addition to programs in the Metro Atlanta area. Check out our website www.mycampsunshine.com, the newsletter and your mail for programs coming to your area.

APRIL 2010

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1 Remembering the Sunshine Family Night	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Family Camp at Camp Twin Lakes	10
11	12 Spa Sydell Night	13	14 Pre-School Music Class Teen Group North	15	16 Family Camp at Camp Twin Lakes	17
18 Family Night Remember the Sunshine Day at Camp Twin Lakes	19	20	21	22 Teen Group	23	24 Savannah Family Camp Day
25	26	27	28 Pre-School Music Class	29	30	

THE NEXT STEPS: OFF TREATMENT WORKSHOP

March 2010
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



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www.mycampsunshine.com

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CAMP SUNSHINE POSTCARDS

COMMUNITY PARTNER



For Preschoolers, Hillcrest Offers Orchard of Delights

Rome Beauty, Pink Lady, Granny Smith, Gala, and more. Hillcrest Apple Orchards in Ellijay harvests a vast variety of apples every fall, but to Camp Sunshine preschoolers and their families they are all, in a word, delicious.

Every fall for the past many years, Hillcrest Orchards on Highway 52 rolls out the welcome mat, sometimes hosting as many as 125 Camp Sunshine children and their parents for a day of outdoor fun. The tradition began in 1999 when Barbara Mayfair, a local resident and Camp Sunshine friend, came up with the idea of an autumn outing for Camp Sunshine preschoolers. "We enjoyed having the children here so much that we just kept doing it and looking forward to it every year," said Hillcrest owner Janice Hale.

"Several years ago I told the Camp Sunshine program directors to please go ahead and put the Hillcrest Apple Orchards outing on the permanent calendar. We want this to be a part of the regular programming for these children every year."

One of the most popular apple orchards and farm markets in the north Georgia mountains, Hillcrest Orchards is located about one and a half hours from Atlanta. It was founded in 1946 by

Janice's father Hayward Reece and today has grown to 80 acres. On their visit to Hillcrest, Camp Sunshine preschoolers get to milk a cow, go on a wagon ride, visit the petting zoo, enjoy a picnic on the grounds, have fun in the playground and pick a pound of juicy apples. Based on their enthusiastic reactions, Janice thinks the favorite activity for many preschoolers is the petting zoo: "There are always a lot of good photographs from the petting zoo – lots of smiling faces; the kids really enjoy the animals."



Although fall is Hillcrest Orchards' busiest season, the annual Camp Sunshine outing is "a special day that makes us stop

and count our blessings," Janice said. "When we first started doing this event, I thought it might be hard to be with the little ones, knowing what they are going through. But it isn't hard at all; it's rewarding. The children are here just to play, be kids and have a good time with their families. It is a great day for all of us." *

