

Special Days Camps

Family Friday



Meet Courtney

Cancer is hard. It is a hard thing to go through. It's a lot of pain and sleepless night; it's spending hundreds of hours in a hospital room; it's eating chips for every meal because nothing else will settle or has a taste; it's your mom giving you the scissors to cut your hair because it's going to fall out anyways; it's wearing headbands and hats over a bald head; it's chemo and steroids and swelling up; it's a growth stunt for 3 years; it's sitting in a wheelchair on one side of the glass window at the hospital with mom on the other side making silly faces because she needed a smoke break and you didn't want her to go; it's pokes and prods and broviacs and morning meds even though you've just fallen asleep after a horrible night; it's still being a kid and being silly and laughing and dancing and having fun; it's growing up with other kids who are just like you when your blessed to find a camp that will support you and your whole family for your whole life. It's a feeling so big in your heart when you give back to that same camp and help those kids like you; it's laughing and smiling and living a life that's never promised; it's what brought me to the greatest joy in my life: Special Days Camps.

Special Days Camps came into our family's lives after cancer hit us hard. For my mom it was a respite for not only her but me and my older sister Cassie for the first time since diagnosis day; a place that made us feel like we were the most special kids ever, a place that was safe to send us after a health scare like cancer rocked our worlds. While we basked in the magic of camp, our mom got the chance to breathe knowing we were 110% safe and happy. As the years passed and our family grew, both my sisters got to experience the magic and joy Special Days provides, my younger sister Caitlyn is still on staff after a lifetime of being a camper. For my sisters camp was a chance to see their friends, to make memories they still talk about and cherish, and to be the star of the show. To take some of my family's words: "Camp is my second home, my escape from reality." "I love everything this camp stands for and all of its campers and counselors." "It does not matter who you are or where you come from, everyone is accepted with open arms." "I feel honored to have been able to experience something as amazing as Special Days Camps for most of my life!" "This camp brought my children more joy and a sense of purpose than I could ever have asked for."

To me camp is...home. I grew up at camp, with this group of friends who were always there, this magic that you could feel the moment you arrived, and this never ending happiness. Special Days is and always will be my break from reality, the place I can go to be the real me, a place to be happy and dance crazy and be silly and cry and get never ending hugs and love. A place I feel safe, with people who are my family and friends, these wonderful children who are in awe that you were once an All Star just like them. Special Days helped to make me who I am today. The staff and campers helped build my self esteem up, helped me to learn to cope with an illness that can break you down, it gave me lifelong memories and family and friends that I hold close to my heart. Camp is something I have looked forward to every year of my life. Life lessons were found on hikes through woods and late night chats in bunks, forever bonds were made on the docks at the lake and sledding down the trails, magic was created through the laughter in the air. Recently I've looked back on my time at Special Days Camps, as a camper and staff, and thought to myself "how did I get so lucky to find such an amazing place"? I've realized now that my time as staff member will quickly surmount my time as a camper, and my memories get fuzzy the more the years pass, the summers blend together and the winter melt in to one, the time of being a camper is getting blurry and my time as a staff is more clear. But the one thing that holds true is the love and laughter, the magic and happily ever after; the friends and family I've found along the way are still with me. I've taken more from Special Days than I could ever repay, but I'll keep dancing crazy with my SDC family forever because Until There's A Cure, There's Camp.

-Courtney and the Elisech Family