



Candlelighters for Children with Cancer: Family Camp

2019 PROGRAM IMPACT SUMMARY REPORT

The goal of Family Camp is to create a community support system that will improve the overall quality of life for families experiencing pediatric cancer. In 2019, Evaluation into Action conducted an independent evaluation to understand impact on families in terms of making social connections, establishing a coping framework, and increasing knowledge in how to navigate pediatric cancer. Methodologies included surveys with parents, teens, and children, as well as tracking attendance to activities and a staff debrief form at the conclusion of camp.¹

THE PROGRAM

FAMILY CAMP IS A THREE-DAY WEEKEND FOR FAMILIES EXPERIENCING PEDIATRIC CANCER.

6 Candlelighters Staff

2 Health-care Providers

8-10 Volunteers

for Oregon and SW Washington families experiencing pediatric cancer

REMOVE GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

Families are from Oregon and SW Washington. The Family Camp removes geographic barriers, creating a safe space for them to connect.

REMOVE FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Camp is provided free of charge which decreases financial barriers to participation.

CORE ACTIVITIES

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

Traditional camp activities facilitate conversations and connections.

Camp activities range from contemplative (meditation workshops) to interactive (parent social hour). All activities seek to create a community support system.

Art Shack
Art Therapy
Bumper Boats/Go-Carts
Campfire
Educational Workshops
Family Photos
Haircuts/Makeovers
Horse Trail Rides

Community Meals
Parent Meditation Workshop
Parent Social Hour
Rock Wall
Teen-focused Activities
Yoga

RESULTS: PARTICIPATION

262

Family Camp participants

72%

of families have been dealing with pediatric cancer for four years or more

68%

were returning families to camp

Activities with the most participation:
campfire, family photos, pool, and family movie night

Activities liked the best:
pool, zipline, horse rides, go-carts, family movie night, parent social hour.

"I liked playing in the splash pad with friends."
(Child)

"I met several other families who are struggling through difficult times w/cancer. It was inspiring to see their positive outlook on life in spite of challenges." (Parent)

¹Parent surveys (N=82), teen surveys (N=40), child surveys (N=37), and staff debrief forms (N=15)

RESULTS: IMPACT

OUTCOME: To expand social connections with other families experiencing pediatric cancer.

Results show Family Camp expanded social connections for these families, as illustrated by the following:

- ✓ 90% of parents strongly agreed they spent time having fun with their family.
- ✓ Most children (95%) reported they had fun and some (68%) reported they made new friends.
- ✓ 73% of teens report they enjoyed the social activities at family camp and 40% said they participated in more social activities than they normally have time to do.

"Seeing my daughter engage w/other kiddos going through or [who] have gone through what she is going through. Boys got to be boys and play. Parents got to know other parents. Felt like we weren't so alone. We got to be a family."

"Happy to make new friends, sad to go home."

Several teens commented "being with friends" was most impactful to them.

OUTCOME: To establish an emotional coping framework.

Survey results show Family Camp fulfilled this outcome to varying degrees. Highlights include:

- ✓ 87% of parents found Family Camp extremely helpful to get away from home-care tasks and responsibilities for some relief.
- ✓ 89% report Family Camp was extremely (63%) or moderately (26%) helpful in providing emotional support from other Family Camp participants.
- ✓ Most teenagers and children agreed (43%, 57%) or somewhat agreed (43%, 19%) that Family Camp was a safe space to share their feelings.
- ✓ 86% of children and 90% of parents felt they got to spend time with their family having fun.

As one parent commented, "I'm so grateful for this time to unwind, refresh, breathe. I have made dear friends here."

"In my community there are no resources to meet other families impacted by pediatric cancer. This camp gave us a chance to realize there are others with the same experiences. Our children were able to meet kids who have been through what they have. It was such an amazing time."

As one teenager shared what was most impactful over the weekend, "Getting to communicate to others in the same situation."

One child stated, "It was fun, relaxing, being with Mommy."

OUTCOME: To increase knowledge about how to navigate the medical process and financial resources.

Results show less progress was made toward this outcome.

- ✓ 27% of parents report they did receive advice on how to navigate pediatric oncology.
- ✓ Of those, 32% felt their understanding of how to do this increased a lot, while others (36%) felt it increased somewhat.
- ✓ 90% of parents report they did not receive advice from others on financial resources available.

Most families were returning to Family Camp and/or have been experiencing pediatric cancer for 4 years or more; therefore, this outcome may be more relevant to families new to Family Camp. Since this outcome applies mostly to a smaller group of people, Candlelighters may consider omitting this outcome from future formal program evaluation activities and instead conduct a small focus group with new families to better understand how their needs were met.



In summary, data show Family Camp had a positive impact on participants. This program builds a network of community that provides emotional and practical support. Families are provided a respite from the daily stresses of cancer treatment as they participate in a variety of fun and inclusive traditional camp activities and recreation with others who are experiencing similar challenges. Family Camp creates a support system for these families experiencing pediatric cancer, providing them with connections and conversations that will sustain them through this difficult period.

