

Families Find Survivorship Support at Camp Courage Wyoming

Summary

Until the creation of Camp Courage Wyoming in 2012, there were no state resources for children with cancer and their families. The Wyoming Comprehensive Cancer Control Consortium (WCCCC) created this unique camp experience to bring these children and their parents and siblings together. An added benefit of the camp is the Wyoming connection it creates for families who must travel outside of Wyoming to obtain specialized cancer treatment for their children; the yearly camp allows families to build a statewide survivorship support network.

Challenge

From 2001–2010, there were 218 cases of cancer diagnosed in children and adolescents (0–19 years old) in Wyoming—an average of 22 cases per year. Though the number of diagnosed childhood cancers may not seem significant, the impact on families in the state is huge. There are no cancer programs or hospitals in Wyoming staffed and equipped to manage these special cases. Children and their caregivers must travel out of state for treatment. Additionally, before 2012 there were no state resources for families of childhood cancer survivors. There was a great need for a sustainable venue within the state allowing children with cancer and their parents and siblings to build connections with and gain survivorship support from other families in Wyoming experiencing the same challenges.

“Most amazing time! This is what our family needed! We didn’t do anything to deserve such an awesome event, but we feel so lucky we were able to be part of it.”

- Octavio Macias



Solution

In 2011, WCCCC created and marketed a cancer survivors' cookbook. The initiative raised \$20,000, and profits from the sale of the cookbook were used to establish Camp Courage. With additional assistance from private donations and corporate sponsorships – and the participation of Jason's Friends Foundation, which helps families dealing with childhood cancer—the first camp took place in August of 2012. It involved ten families, each having a child undergoing cancer treatment. The camp takes place over a weekend (Friday through Sunday), but the effect is long-lasting. Parents and children have been able to forge relationships that have lasted years.

Results

Camp Courage Wyoming has been a valued addition to the State of Wyoming's survivorship resources for supporting children with cancer. Camp Courage has been held each year since 2012 at the Crooked Creek Guest Ranch in Dubois, Wyoming. Ten families attend each year, and with donations and fundraising, and a completely volunteer staff, they are able to participate free of charge. During the weekend, activities include arts and crafts, nightly campfires, and physical activities such as hiking, fishing, and horseback riding. Counseling and support group activities are provided, and families can take advantage of educational workshops taught by a physician specializing in childhood cancers. The supportive services and survivorship resources provided to the parents and the siblings are among its greatest successes. Caregivers have the opportunity to connect with others and share their experiences. They are able to talk with others who understand and empathize with the challenges associated with having a child diagnosed with cancer.

Sustainable Success

Camp Courage Wyoming continues to find support in the community. In 2013, the camp partnered with City Brew Coffee, a chain based in the Western U.S., and to date has sold approximately 600 bags of specially blended ground coffee, raising \$3,000 to support the camp. An initiative by Wyoming State Representative Ken Esquibel resulted in \$10,000 per year being appropriated to operate the camp and its activities. It is also funded by corporate sponsorships and private donations of time and materials. All these efforts allow the children and their families to attend, bond, and learn from each other.

Your Involvement Is Key

Camp Courage Wyoming is made possible completely by volunteers and fundraising. It is extremely important to have support of the community to make Camp Courage Wyoming a success. For more information on Camp Courage (<http://fightcancerwy.com/camp-courage-wyoming/>) and how your family might be able to attend or how you or your organization can support the camp, please contact Jessica Perez, WCCC Outreach Coordinator (<http://www.health.wyo.gov/EmailUs.aspx?SecID=10>).



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