

A LETTER from the HEART

Camp del Corazon's quarterly newsletter for campers, parents and friends

Winter 2003

A note from the Executive Director

A moment in time



*Lisa Knight, R.N.
Executive Director
Camp del Corazon*

There's no place like camp!

Camp del Corazon counselors (left to right in the back) Suzy Q, Ariel, Trixie and Bayzil with campers (left to right) Savannah Todd, Yasi Emamian, Nicole Rimes, Paige Brandt, and Shelby Grundy (peeking over Nicole).



If you were to ask me what is the most magical time that happens at Camp del Corazon, it would be when I get to be witness to "A Moment!"

When we arrive on Catalina Island, campers and staff have come from the mainland with all the beliefs and fears of who we are and what we think will happen over the next five days. That perception quickly changes as we step into a very different reality. Who and what we thought we were in the "real world" does not matter and frankly no one cares. As if on sacred ground, we all are together on the island for one reason only: to give these wonderful special children a little bit of something more. A moment!

You never know when or with whom it will happen. It is a different experience for every person. I just know that it will happen at some time at camp. A moment in time that transforms us. It is when we understand why we gave up five or ten days of our lives to come to Camp del Corazon.

It may be the first time a camper tells you that he has never tasted salt water, or hit the top of the climbing wall. It may be the adult congenital staff member who for the first time found someone who really understands the fear of growing up with heart disease.

These moments happen all over camp. I often can tell when the moment has happened for someone. They look different. It reminds me of my favorite movie moment when the heart of the Grinch Who Stole Christmas grows three times its size.

The most amazing thing about "a moment" is that it changes our lives forever. It is just a little bit of something more. We take it back to the "real world" and it makes life just a little kinder and gentler.

I want to thank all of you who make these "moments" possible. It is only through your donations and support that we can continue to grow as an organization. As we head into the holiday season I wish you all a wonderful and blessed Moment in Time!

Camp del Corazon holiday tributes make a great gift

Are fruitcakes and chocolates still appropriate holiday gifts? Why not give the gift that keeps on giving? You can make a donation in the name of your family or friends and we will send a Camp del Corazon Holiday Tribute notifying that person of the donation in his or her name. Simply use the enclosed remit envelope and be sure to include your loved one's name and address to send the tribute. We'll let them know that they are helping send kids to camp!

2nd annual Family Festival raises over \$100,000 for camp

The 2nd Annual Camp del Corazon Family Festival featuring the Warrior Sand Competition™ was a great big success, raising over \$100,000 for the camp! That's almost double the dollar amount of last year, with very strong participation in the 5K Beach Stroll and triple last year's participants in the Warrior Sand Competition.

The day also featured a Kid's Camp children's area, live music by our very own Lewanda (aka Skaie Zoe), a BBQ put on by the Long Beach Fire Department as well as a fire boat water display and engines, an address by Deputy Police Chief Ted Hulseley, many vendors and artisans, and great prizes including home theater systems, Goodyear blimp rides, and tickets on JetBlue Airways.

Our very own Executive Director Lisa Knight ("Xena") and Medical Director Dr. Kevin Shannon ("Big Kahuna") combined with trainer Amberly to form a team for the Warrior Sand Competition. This 5K race in the sand was capped by 10 grueling (for participants) and hilarious (for bystanders) obstacles, which were built and run by the Los Angeles Air Force Base Company Grade Officers' Association. It was won by a team from the Long Beach Police Department, but we think if Xena and Big Kahuna start training for next year, they can take it.

As Director of this event, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to everyone who volunteered their time and effort to make this the amazing event that it turned out to be. We had a 12-person committee who spent time on this virtually every day for the past 6 months, about 40 Air Force personnel building obstacles since July, assistance along the way from numerous helpful people who have joined the efforts of Camp del Corazon, and over 75 volunteers make this happen on the day of the event. Thank you, and I hope we see you out there next year!

From the Heart,
BuBu



Steve Sims, Nick Bianchi and Hanley Valentine get down and dirty on one of the obstacles in The Warrior Sand Competition.



Team Captain Tosha Veiga and her Dancin' Queens during the 5k Beach Stroll.

Donor's Corner

Donor and volunteer Stacy Klein

Stacy Klein is a remarkable young lady. Camp del Corazon Executive Director Lisa Knight first met Stacy as a patient when she was diagnosed with significant heart disease and received a pacemaker. As a young adult she first had to understand and accept her diagnosis and then, more significantly, learn to live with heart disease. Stacy not only accepted her misfortune but embraced it. She never considered herself unfortunate, but rather unique. It was not long after this life changing experience that Stacy learned of Camp del Corazon. Initially, Stacy attended camp as a Counselor in Training, where she quickly understood the importance of helping younger children who share similar fears and concerns.

Stacy has regularly dedicated her free time to helping in the camp office, sending out mailings, preparing for and working at fundraising events, and doing general office work – all with exceptional results. One of the most significant projects Stacy has undertaken has been a fundraising project of her own design. Stacy started a letter writing campaign, contacting friends and family and asking for donations to keep camp going. To date, her campaign has raised over \$10,000.00! We couldn't be more proud or more grateful to have her as a volunteer!



Black tie event scheduled for Spring

Camp del Corazon is excited to be planning our first ever Gala Event! The gala is scheduled for Spring, so stay tuned, as this is going to prove to be a great event ...not your usual black tie event! We are looking for silent auction items for our "Trinkets and Treasures" area and for sponsors who might be interested in "buying" tables to benefit our camp.

Macy's Benefit a huge success

A big thank you to everyone who participated in and purchased tickets towards the Macy's Pasadena Benefit Shopping Day. We were able to sell our quota of 100 tickets, and raised over \$1,000! A special thank you to Jan Emamian, Kelly Johnson and Myra Lerma for selling the most tickets. We are looking forward to doing this event again soon at other Macy's in your area!

A big thank you!

Eagle Sports and Awards

A special thanks needs to go to Elliot Heffler and Eagle Sports and Awards for donating 1,000 water bottles for this year's camp session. We appreciate the donation!

Hogan Young

Thank you to Hogan Young for again donating the beautiful trophies for the Warrior Sand Competition.

Collectivenergy, Inc.

Thank you to Collectivenergy, Inc. for designing this edition of *A Letter from the Heart*. Collectivenergy is an Orange County-based marketing communications agency that has been helping Camp del Corazon for the last few years. Their phone number is (949) 248-3950.

Correction



In the Summer edition of *A Letter from the Heart*, there were factual errors in the Donor's Corner article about the

Chereese Mari Lauhere Foundation. We apologize for these errors and any confusion they may have caused. Below is the correct information.

Chereese Mari Lauhere
Foundation

Chereese Mari Lauhere is beloved by many. She was born September 17, 1974 in Long Beach, CA and at age 21 her life was tragically and unexpectedly taken on March 27, 1996 in Agra, India. For more information about Chereese's life and her Foundation please view her website at www.chereese.org.

Camper Scott Antolick, 1986-2003

We recently lost Scott Antolick, a camper who had attended Camp del Corazon for the past seven years. His favorites activities included Ultimate Frisbee and football. Scott was born on Sept. 16, 1986, with a congenital heart defect but a smile on his face. The smile was a measure of the courage that would

sustain him, and help his parents through four heart operations for transposition of the major vessels in his first 13 years.

As Scott's senior year at Venice High began this fall, he decided to apply to Harvard College and study to become a biomedical engineer, a career that would let him help children with heart defects. His life was full of study and community projects, with a rare afternoon open for one of his new pleasures, Ultimate Frisbee. He was playing the game with friends on Friday October 17, 2003, when he collapsed and passed away. Below is an excerpt from an essay Scott wrote to accompany his early action application to Harvard College.

For the last seven years I have attended Camp del Corazon on Catalina Island, a camp offered at no cost to children with heart disease. I have had wonderful experiences at camp and always look forward to the next time. I remember my first attempt to go up the climbing wall at camp. I was a little doubtful that I could make it because, after all, I have a heart

condition and did not have very good stamina at that time.

However, with the cheering of my newfound friends and counselors, I made it to the top. The first thing I saw when I struggled over the edge of the wall was the camp symbol. Then my attention was drawn to the magnificent view, not only of our harbor, but also of the emerald bay on one side and a private yacht club on the other. I felt that I was on top of the world.

One of my favorite activities was playing ultimate Frisbee during rest hour. Almost all the guys and a few of the girls and nurses came out and played for a couple hours. By the end, everyone was hot and sweaty and it was time to move on to the next fun filled activity, so much for resting. Next summer I will be too old to be a camper. But, after completing the leadership program, I hope to become a counselor, to help create many happy memories and uplifting experiences for other children.



“My personal moment”

by camp counselor
Colleen Holder (aka Kool-Aid)

I love the first day at Camp down on the waterfront for the swim test and the kids are all kind of tentative because they don't want anyone to see their scars. Then a few minutes goes by and they notice, 'Hey. You have a scar too...Wait a minute, so do you, yours is just like mine,' and so on. And then they realize they are not alone. They start bonding and making friends and talking about their surgeries...And then, slowly, they start to forget about their problems and limitations and before you know it, the MAGIC BEGINS.

In addition to being a counselor, Colleen is also an Adult Congenital Heart Disease patient.

Winter edition!



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