



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Love, a Non-Profit Supporting Children with Cancer, Hosts 35th Camp Fantastic with a “Camp Fantastic Studios” Theme

More than 100 oncology campers from the mid-Atlantic area will create movie magic August 13-19

Winchester, VA – More than 100 mid-Atlantic area children with cancer will enjoy a week-long break from their health challenges when they attend the 35th annual Camp Fantastic on August 13-19 at the Northern VA 4-H Educational Center in Front Royal. The outing is one of more than a dozen programs sponsored by Special Love, Inc., a charity founded in 1983 by Tom and Sheila Baker after they lost their young daughter, Julie, to lymphoma.



This year’s event, “Camp Fantastic Studios,” will include **a Superhero Night, a Wild West adventure, beach and sports nights, and even a Beauty and the Beast banquet and Harry Potter-themed final dance.** The daily schedule also includes traditional camp activities such as swimming, fishing, crafts, woodworking, and campfire, as well fresh offerings like Weird Science, where campers can build and operate a potato cannon and other science wizardry. Tuesday night, August 15, is also Visitors’ Night with special guests including Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health. On Friday afternoon, August 18, several camp leaders, including 4-H Center Director Jennifer Carter, will shave their heads in support of the program, collecting pledge dollars.

The mission of Camp Fantastic and all of Special Love’s programs is to **help young cancer patients feel they’re not alone or “different” because of their illness.** The camps make them feel special and connected to other kids with cancer. “I tell first-time participants that camp is the closest thing they’ll find to heaven on earth,” says Dave Smith, Special Love’s CEO and director of Camp Fantastic. “It’s unconditional acceptance, optimism, and a sense of adventure unlike anything they’ll find anywhere else.”

Campers come from throughout Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC, and hundreds of volunteers help make the “Fantastic” week happen. Camp Fantastic’s **medical staffing, coordinated by the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, provides care as needed.** Approximately 30 percent of the campers remain on treatment and may require chemotherapy, blood counts, routine medications, or simple monitoring. Campers arrive in Front Royal on Sunday, August 13, where they join a convoy of Harley-Davidson motorcycles and a police escort, which leads them to the 4-H Center. The rest of their week is provided courtesy of more than 100 program and medical volunteers, as well as members of local civic clubs and community groups. Among them are the Rotary Clubs of Winchester, Front Royal, Gaithersburg, and Culpeper, the Kiwanis Club of Winchester, and community leaders from Rappahannock County. McDonald’s and Carrabba’s will also each cater a meal.

Since Special Love’s first Camp Fantastic in 1983, children with cancer have a combined five-year survival rate of over 80%, mostly due to major treatment advances. Because the side effects of treatment — such as baldness, weakness, and pallor traditionally associated with chemotherapy — have diminished, many of the children of Camp Fantastic 2017 will bear little resemblance to their nearly 3,000 predecessors. Still, they live with the same

anxiety and stress that their diagnoses and the rigors of treatment can cause. Camp Fantastic helps reduce these fears and instills hope and optimism. For more information or to schedule a visit to Camp Fantastic, call 888-930-2707 or visit www.speciallove.org.

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