



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Special Love, a Non-Profit Supporting Children with Cancer,
Hosts 33rd Camp Fantastic with a “University of Camp Fantastic” Theme**

More than 100 oncology campers from the mid-Atlantic area will live the collegiate life August 16-22

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 33rd annual Camp Fantastic on August 16-22 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, “University of Camp Fantastic,” will include a **“rush party” dance, freshman carnival, mascot day, and “spring break” trip** to a Culpeper farm. The daily schedule also includes such traditional camp activities as swimming, fishing, crafts, woodworking, and campfire, as well as new features including a news broadcasting class, two camp-wide art projects, and a star-gazing session.

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 16, where they join a convoy of Harley-Davidson motorcycles and a police escort, which leads them to the 4-H Center. **On Thursday, August 20, Special Love supporters join camp for our annual Visitors’ Night** to enjoy a barbecue dinner and to cheer on the children during the popular, camper-produced talent show.

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 2015 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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