From the Studio Director

Lights! Camera! Action! That pretty much summed up not only our week-long BRASS Camp and Camp Fantastic adventures last year, but also the weekend retreats and support that filled out the rest of our year:

Lights—camp is all about getting out of the hospital (or the house) and into the sunshine. For BRASS campers, it’s also about getting into the spotlight, something they’ve been sorely missing since their brother or sister was diagnosed. And lastly, it’s about feeling free to talk about your experiences without fear of being judged or stigmatized because of them.

Camera— the pages of this scrapbook are overflowing with wonderful memories, all captured by the volunteers and NIH photographers who joined us at camp. We hope the enclosed photos bring you lots of smiles, and we hope you’ll join us at a program in 2018 so you can be in a few of them!

Action— that’s what camp is all about, having fun and being part of the action. From sports and games to informational classes and evening adventures, our community of support doesn’t slow down for long. We celebrate life by living, in every way possible.

Now it’s time for you to be part of the action, by participating in a retreat as a camper and/or volunteer, or by joining our community of supporters. You can find out how at our website below or our Facebook page. In the meantime, enjoy the Special Love that’s captured in these pages.

Hope to see you at a Special Love event soon!

Dave

Dave Smith, CEO
www.specialove.org
www.facebook.com/speciallovecamps

From the Executive Producer

This year’s BRASS Camp theme was “We Are Family,” a sentiment that most assuredly describes the heart of Special Love’s mission. As our beloved founder, Tom Baker, often said, “When a child gets cancer, a family gets cancer.”

Tom’s passing shortly after the completion of our 35th year was heartbreaking, but we are buoyed by the knowledge that his legacy lives on in every one of us who met him. His profound influence can be felt in the magic of the programs we conduct and the friendships those programs help create.

My daughter, Julia, was a camper more than two decades ago and Tom was one of the first people who walked up to us at a family weekend and made us feel at home. Likewise, Julia’s brothers felt an instant bond to BRASS Camp and enjoyed many years as both campers and counselors. We’ve been coming back to our camp home ever since.

It’s been my pleasure to serve as Special Love’s board president for the past two years. As I step down, I’m grateful for all the dedication and compassion that my fellow board members have shown and I’m excited to join them in several new initiatives that are already underway for the coming year. I hope you’ll join us for them—our family is eager to include you.

Thanks to all of our supporters (you’ll see them listed toward the back of this book, along with a special tribute to Tom) and best wishes for Special Love all year long.

Shari

Shari Fisher, President
2017 Board of Directors
Camp Fantastic is Special Love’s original offering and our 35th annual edition welcomed 108 kids from hospitals throughout the Mid-Atlantic to “Camp Fantastic Studios,” where they spent a week of movie-themed fun and friendship. Check out our evening fun beginning on page 6 and our educational and challenging classes on pages 12 and 13.

Thanks to our collaboration with the National Cancer Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health), Camp Fantastic was able to host pediatric cancer patients in all stages of treatment. And thanks to generous funding from the Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust, the Richmond Shag Club, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, KOA Care Camps, WRC-TV’s “Camp 4 Kids”, SOS4Cancer, American Woodmark, and the Support Beam Foundation, no eligible child was turned away. And a special nod to the many civic clubs, motorcycle groups, and our wonderful volunteers and staff at the Northern VA 4-H Center for the camp magic!
Camp Fantastic Studios kicked off its “production” of Camp Fantastic with studio (camp) tours, counselor meet-and-greets, and medical check-in, then it was off to the pool and a delicious cookout courtesy of the Gaithersburg Rotary Club. The pool fun continued with a Beach Party and line dancing by the Richmond Shag Club! The evening included a belly flop contest with members of the staff and our first campfire of the week... what a great way to wrap up our first night of “filming.”
Our first full day of camp was heroic—camp classes got off to a great start and when we had rainy weather in the early afternoon, it was Capt. Token to the rescue with a magic matinee! We did our annual tree planting after dinner and enjoyed an influx of Superheroes and super games for our Monday night carnival, thanks to all our friends at Washington REIT. They provided cape-making, an obstacle course, action movie clips, and other super fun!
Tuesday was Sports/Comedy Day!

We love to change things up at camp so this year we moved Visitors Night to TUESDAY, giving our wonderful donors and supporters an up-close look at the camp action. We welcomed lots of special guests, including many folks from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and National Institutes of Health, including NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins. Highlights included a fishing derby group (top right corner), virtual reality demonstrations courtesy of Capital One (top left), and fun sports-themed games.
Farm Day—or should we say “Western Day”—is one of our favorite days at camp! Kacey and Marshall Jenkins transform their property to accommodate Camp Fantastic, filling it with everything from animals to pet and ride to miniature golf, carnival games, remote-controlled planes, and more. The Rotary Club in Culpeper helps coordinate dozens of volunteers to give our campers an amazing afternoon. Our teens lead the convoy home so they can get back early for bowling in Front Royal, while the younger campers head back to their lodges to practice for the next day’s talent show and get an early bedtime.
Thursday was a busy day with visitors from Trout Unlimited and the Mid-Atlantic PGA golf pros, not to mention our annual Talent Show! Following a delicious grilled chicken dinner prepared by the barbecue crew from the Rotary Club of Winchester, our campers brought down the house with their singing, dancing, and other performances.

The bedrock of any talent show: drumming class

Audience participation for The National Anthem
Friday is the day we’re excited to see but don’t want to end because it’s the last full day of camp. We kicked off our 2017 finale by shaving the heads of a few of our staff, including Director Dave, 4-H Center Director Jennifer, and counselors Sean and Alex. (See the front cover for the “after” photo...) We also welcomed volunteers from American Woodmark, who did “stress bottles” with the campers (see top right photo). We also enjoyed a delicious dinner catered by Carrabbas before we headed to campfire, where the medical staff came out and entertained the kids in style. The night finished with a bang—fireworks and an awesome Harry Potter Luna Ball that had the campers dancing the night away. We didn’t want it to end!
Our mornings and early afternoons presented lots of opportunities to learn, like wacky science (special effects), cooking, woodworking, and traditional favorites like canoeing, swimming, horseback riding, sports, and the challenge course. Sign language class made its debut in 2017 and golf class enjoyed an off-site trip for the Justin Steinberg Memorial Golf Tourney.
Junior Challenge

Sports Class

Swimming Class—look out for that sneak attack!

Tennis

Sign Language Class

Camping

Spinning a Good Yarn

Dancing

Network (News & More)
BRASS Camp, started in 1987, gives siblings a chance to be heard, to be accepted, and to be loved! The name says it all, because at BRASS Camp they are the “Top BRASS,” worthy of all the attention, recreation, and fun they can get. BRASS Camp is one of the few camps in North America where it’s ALL about siblings and even the staff are mostly former campers and/or cancer siblings.

Our 2017 festivities included crabbing, canoeing, and fishing on Breton Bay, as well as campfires featuring the beautiful sunsets of Camp Maria and family-themed fun. Check out the wide variety of class options on pages 24 and 25. Our evenings were just as exciting and included the Battle of the Clans, a Family Talent Show, and even a Family Wedding (where both sides of the wedding party were related). And speaking of family, the Gwen Laulhere Foundation was once again our true family, supporting ALL our BRASS antics, including another off-site trip to a local water park.
What better way to kick-off our family-themed week than with a BRASS family reunion! Once we unloaded the buses got campers to their cabins, we enjoyed a cookout followed by a pool party and “live” moonshiner music. Yeehaw!

The BRASS Family Moonshiners Band!
Monday’s Battle of the Clans

Family fame (or infamy) is earned, Minute to Win It style...
Tuesday’s Family Feud!
What’s a family reunion without a little in-fighting? And mummy wrapping? And synchronized swimming?

Yikes, just yikes.

Keep Calm and Feud On
Every family needs a break from each other every once in a while... so on Hump Day we took a day trip to the Chesapeake Beach Water Park for a little fun in the sun. Reinvigorated, we returned to Camp Maria for a relaxing movie night.
THURSDAYS’ FAMILY TALENT SHOW!

BRASS welcomed members of Special Love’s board and VIP donors to Visitors Night and our Family Talent Show. The performances and the amazing talent that our campers displayed was awe-inspiring and love by the entire family!

*Smile—it’s Picture Day!*
Friday is a busy day at BRASS as it means the banquet, the closing campfire and candlelighting, and, most importantly, the dance! We also had a very special wedding as Oscar the Grouch was reunited with Nurse Kratchit, much to the relief of her would-be groom, Ben. The wedding party was huge (after all, most of the members were already related), and even Mother Nature tried to crash the festivities, but in true BRASS Camp fashion we made it work anyway!
Family Fun Activities!

Class time meant fun and educational activities for every member of the BRASS family!

Serious Sports
Woodworking
Swimming
Family Band
Family Secrets
Beauty Class
More Family Activities

- Crabbing and Fishing
- Cooking
- Crafts
- Canoeing
- Silly Games
This year’s Fantastic Winter Weekend hosted 73 teens, young adults, and volunteers for a weekend of fun activities, including a day of skiing, snowboarding, and tubing at Bryce Resort. Thanks to funding from Boring Goats “Soap for Hope,” we also enjoyed late night talks, get-acquainted activities, and lots of pizza. It was mid-winter fun just for young adult survivors.
One hundred ninety-five people enjoyed a 4-day winter trip to Canaan Valley Resort in Davis, WV, where they enjoyed lots of outdoor and indoor activities. Thanks to members of the Challenged Athletes of WV and Canaan’s ski school, everyone who wanted to learn to ski or snowboard got the chance. The Children’s Cancer Recovery Foundation once again assisted a dozen families by covering their registration fees. Favorite activities off the slopes included bingo, movie night, and the hot tub!
BRASS Weekend, our annual weekend salute to siblings, was in your face (and so were the cupcakes—see below left)! More than 75 people joined us for a sunny weekend at the 4-H Center complete with family-themed games and activities, a beauty spa (at least for 4 lucky counselors who got a homemade facial), a hike, and lots of time for socializing.
Eighty-one people, many from the Richmond/Tidewater area, joined us for a traditional camp weekend of canoeing, fishing, campfires, sports, and challenge course activities at Airfield 4-H Center. Damuth Trane joined us again with delicious food and we also hosted Navy volunteers from the USS Gerald R. Ford to help with our sports activities in recognition of our “March Madness” theme (they’re pictured with a camper in the photo at right in the top row). Tidewater Family Weekend again helped us reach families at nearby hospitals like Children’s of Richmond, King’s Daughters in Norfolk, and Portsmouth Naval.
Spring Family Weekend
Northern VA 4-H Center—Front Royal, VA

Spring Family Weekend treated 94 people to “creek critter hunting” and fishing courtesy of our friends at Trout Unlimited, as well as a camp carnival featuring contests and prizes and a host of camp activities like soccer courtesy of “Soccer for the Future,” drumming, cooking, woodworking, canoeing, and lots of rounds of indoor ga-ga (see the photo at bottom left).

The weekend also gave families a convenient opportunity to have their Camp Fantastic pre-screenings done.
YAC Weekend traveled back down south in 2017 and enjoyed a Saturday trip to the beach for some sun-soaked fun. The remainder of the weekend was spent at Airfield 4-H Center where we enjoyed socializing, pizza, movies, and lively conversation. An intimate crowd of 22 people enjoyed spending time together and knowing they had supporters in their cancer journey.
We hosted 156 people at Reunion Weekend 2017 and reminded them of what drew them to camp in the first place—fun in the creek, at the pool, and in the woods! Trout Unlimited joined us once again for fishing fun and we welcomed Jo Santiago of the U.S. Forest Service for a fascinating program on raptors (birds of prey). We also had several long-time veteran volunteers join a reception honoring Dave Smith on the 30th anniversary of his employment. Thanks to DEPCOM Power, Inc. for sponsoring!
Fantastic Friends Weekend shook things up in 2017 as we took our 13-17-year-old cancer survivors and their friends to Splashdown Water Park in Manassas, VA. Our salute to teen friends also gave them the chance for a late night pool party, as well as games, pizza, and late night fun. Thanks as always to the Front Royal Kiwanis Club for another great breakfast, to NW Works for gift bags (see page 38) and to Boring Goats and “Soap for Hope” for providing funding. (www.boringgoats.com)
We were excited to finally enjoy an outdoor Fall Festival of Leaves (after Mother Nature rained on our parade — literally—for three out of the past four years). Front Royal provided the backdrop for 145 people to enjoy a morning and early afternoon of parades, local food, and activities in town, followed by sports, pumpkin carving, crafts, and cooking back at the 4-H Center later that day. We spent Saturday evening roaming the haunted hallways of the conference center and enjoying dodgeball and live music. Funding for Octoberfest 2017 came from the Special Appeal at our “Casino Royale” gala in April.
Parents Getaway Weekend

George Washington Hotel, Winchester, VA

Parenting is tough, especially after a cancer diagnosis. Family routines are disrupted and Mom and Dad are pulled apart in their rush to care for their sick child. Parents Getaway Weekend provides an opportunity for parents to reconnect or, in the case of single parents, a chance to connect to other parents who understand what they’re going through. And what better place to connect than a 4-star hotel where they can be pampered with massages, make-overs, and relaxation! We hosted 53 parents at the George Washington Hotel in historic Old Town Winchester, where they heard from long-time BRASS leader Donna Gregory as she presented her doctoral program on the needs of siblings. They also enjoyed a presentation by former camper and current counselor Serena Wade on her cancer journey and how camp has continued to sustain her throughout it.
More than 235 people helped us kick off the holiday season with great food, gifts courtesy of SOS4Cancer, singing, crafts, and LOTS of photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus! The National Capital Optimists provided generous funding (and chocolate) and the Kapitol Clowns were again our go-to source for elaborate face painting and balloons. They really made the season bright!
Camp popped up in some unusual places in 2017—like at Capital One’s offices in Northern Virginia (see photo at left and first row below). Campers enjoyed crafts, games, a photo booth, virtual reality demos, and great food while their parents opted for free massages. We also enjoyed another Family Day at KOA (see bottom photos) and Fantasy Flight, and held in-hospital pop-up camps in Baltimore, No. Virginia, and Richmond under the leadership of Kristen Graney and with help from volunteers like Gabby, Mary, Olivia, Chuck and Claire. Watch for many more to come!
All of Special Love’s programs are made possible by generous donations of time, talents, and funding. While the preceding pages document many of the people who gave of their time and talents, following are those who made a financial donation during 2017. Love and appreciation go to all those listed here, as well as anyone we may have inadvertently missed. Note that some gifts may have been just before or after the calendar year, in which case they may be listed in a different scrapbook. Call us at 888-930-2707 or visit us at www.speciallove.org/donate if you’d like to be part of our 2018 community of support—or if you believe your donation was not captured in the following pages and should have been. Thanks again for helping us “let kids be kids.”

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Jonathan Zimmer
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We put the “fun” in fun-raising!

It takes a lot of funds to run Special Love’s year-round programming, but that doesn’t mean we can’t have some fun doing it! The annual Chesapeake Bay Blues Festival (below, first two rows) is a great example of “a great time for a good cause” and last year kicked off with a Mummer’s Parade and featured tattoos and ice cream courtesy of Ale, Ryan, and our camp families.

More Fun (clockwise from right): The Snyders enjoyed “Joker’s Wild” in Winchester, where folks were winning money right under their noses; “Cuts for Camp” had the entire Thomas clan buzzing, not to mention the aptly named “Friends of Special Love at VA Tech”; costumes and facepainting were prevalent at the “Team Mathias 5K Fun Run”; and the Fout Family helped raise funds at KOA Williamsburg’s “Big Weekend” for KOA Care Camps.
A ready group of runners from E-PAGA, our Title Sponsor

And they’re off!

A visit from Princess Cupcake
We benefited from lots of great events during the year, three of which are in-house: “Casino Royale” (pictured here), the “Fall in Love 5K/10K” (page 45), and the Camp Fantastic Golf Tournament (page 43, bottom). The rest of our event funding is courtesy of the wonderful folks pictured on pages 42-45.
Our golfers showed their true colors: Special Love is blessed to receive support from five different golf tournaments throughout the year, including the Mark Moseley Celebrity Golf Tournament, held in Leesburg (above left with a burgundy border), the Pat Collins Memorial CF Golf Tournament, held in Sterling (above right, in yellow), the PSI Golf Tournament, held in Laytonsville, MD (below, in blue), the Richmond Shag Club Golf Tournament, held in Chesterfield (below, in green), and the Camp Fantastic Golf Tournament, held in Winchester (below, in red). They had a great time for a great cause—our kids!
The Institute for Real Estate Management (IREM) was the first recipient of Special Love’s “Circle of Love” award in 2016 after a decade of running The IREM Gala to benefit our campers and families. Shown here with Special Love CEO Dave Smith (center) and BRASS ambassador Emily Crabtree are members of the 2017 gala committee (from left): Anthony Curtis, Jean Collins, Kent Bell (gala chair), Jim Crawford, Rob Collins, Catherine Smolka, and Amy Waldron.

Emily wows the crowd while her brother, Tyler, and mom look proudly on.

2017 IREM Gala Sponsors
A Special Shout-out to Our Awesome Volunteers

Our volunteers provide the energy and the magic that makes camp happen. Their creativity, loving personality, and patience enable us to provide families a safe, fun environment at camp. Special Love is blessed to have hundreds of volunteers engaged in our programs, both camp-based and fundraisers. To ALL of our amazing volunteers, including those pictured here, we send out love and a huge HOW! HOW! for everything you do.
A Loving Tribute to our Co-Founder, Tom Baker
(1938-2018)

When Tom Baker walked into the Northern VA 4-H Center in August of 1982 with his wife, Sheila, he created an incredible community of support that has grown over the past 35 years to include tens of thousands of patients, siblings, parents, and volunteers and touch the lives of thousands more. The friendships and memories that have been created at Camp Fantastic, BRASS Camp, and all of Special Love’s programs are a testament to Tom’s vision and his humanity, one that will carry on through the compassion of our wonderful volunteers and our brave families.

Tom was a giant even among inflatables...