



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Special Love® , a Non-Profit Supporting Children with Cancer and their Families,
Hosts 36th Camp Fantastic with “Once Upon a Time” Theme**

Winchester, VA – More than 100 mid-Atlantic area children with cancer, ages 7 to 17, will take a desperately needed break from doctor visits and hospital stays when they attend the 36th Camp Fantastic on August 12-18 at the Northern VA 4-H Educational Center in Front Royal, Virginia.

Camp Fantastic is one of more than a dozen programs of Special Love®, a charity founded in 1983 by the late Tom Baker and his wife, Sheila, after they lost their young daughter, Julie, to lymphoma.

This year’s camp, “Once Upon a Time,” will magically transport campers back in time, revisiting “the best of Camp Fantastic” from 36 fun-filled years with the help of a storyteller at each night’s campfire, fairy tale characters visiting throughout the week, and campers participating in such entertaining events as unicorn races, royalty classes, and synchronized swimming.

On tap for each evening are these activities planned specifically for this special group of campers:

- Monday is an **Enchanted Forest Festival**, complete with crown-making, a photo booth, and MadLibs
- Tuesday is **Bonkers Night**, filled with a collection of wacky – and interactive – activities and contests
- Tuesday also is **Visitors’ Night**, beginning at 5:30 p.m., with special guests including Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health; visitors will enjoy dinner with the campers and camper-led tours
- Wednesday is **Farm Day** with a Magical Mystery Trip to Southwind Farm in Culpeper
- Thursday is the ever-popular **Storytime Talent Show**, bringing back the greatest acts from years past
- Friday is the **Alice in Wonderland Banquet and Dance**, closing the adventure-filled week

The daily camp schedule also includes traditional camp activities such as swimming, fishing, crafts, woodworking, sports, and campfire – the full gamut of camper-focused fun adapted to each camper’s ability.

Camp Fantastic and all of Special Love® programs are designed 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 Senior Director of Outreach & Programs. “It’s unconditional acceptance, optimism, and a sense of adventure unlike anything they’ll find anywhere else.”

Camp Fantastic **medical staffing, coordinated by the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, provides care to the children as needed.** Approximately 30 percent of our campers remain in treatment and may require chemotherapy, blood counts, routine medications, or simple monitoring – **all of which is provided on site at Camp Fantastic, unique in the pediatric oncology camp community.**

About Special Love®

Headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, Special Love® offers camps and a community of support to children with cancer and their families. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization offers a year-long program of free camps, postsecondary education scholarships, emergency financial assistance, and a vast community of support to these courageous families. Each year, Special Love® serves nearly 1,000 people in Virginia, Maryland, Washington DC, West Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. **Funded entirely by private donations, Special Love®'s programs help young cancer patients feel they're not alone or "different" because of their illness and help families feel normal again.**

For more information or to schedule a visit to Camp Fantastic, contact Robin Couch Cardillo at 888-930-2707 or rccardillo@speciallove.org or visit www.speciallove.org.

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