

LOVE LETTER

NOVEMBER 2019 | FALL ISSUE



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Finding Hope When All Seems Lost

An essay by our own
Emma Snider

Hi my name is Emma Snider, I'm 15 years old, and I'm involved with Special Love's BRASS Camp. My family and I have been involved with Special Love for the last 5 years. When I was 9 years old my life changed drastically. My sister, Abby, was 15 years old at the time and she was diagnosed with T-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Over the course of her 3 year treatment she lost her hair several times. Her body was put past its breaking point over and over from chemotherapy and radiation, treatment that was supposed to save her, and she came close to dying too many times to count.



FINDING HOPE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

I still remember the most challenging time of her fight, as it will forever haunt me. I remember the first few weeks of utter devastation and sorrow like they happened yesterday. When the doctor sat us in a room and said the very words "Abby, you have leukemia". In just 4 words my life was changed forever and I was no longer a normal 9 year old girl. I wish people knew what cancer really does to the families it invades. Those happy bald kids you see on TV are not the reality we live in on a daily fight with cancer. My reality was walking into my sister's room watching her grasping onto life and fearing the next time I walked into her room she would be gone. People only see what we show them and what we show them is our fake smiles because sometimes the fake smile is the only thing keeping us from breaking.

BRASS Camp is where the fake smile becomes real for me. We always talk about how there is a sense of magic at camp. This "magic" brings us together and makes us forget about our lives for a split second but also allows us to heal and gain hope for us to take back home to the battle grounds. This magic to me, the thought of coming back every year was at one point the only thing keeping me from losing all hope. Every time we attend camp we take a little of it back with us. That magic for me, what I took back the first time, it was hope.

There are a lot of misconceptions about childhood cancer. I think the biggest is that people believe it was something you did wrong, or your eating habits, or maybe something you inherited from your parents. But the reality is childhood cancer takes whoever it wants and there's no way of preventing it. In the end there is nothing anyone did to cause the battle we were put through.

I'm writing this in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness month. Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is the time people who have been affected by childhood cancer or who genuinely care about the cause can spread the word. We can show the reality of childhood cancer and what we live in. It may not prevent someone else from going through it, but it may encourage others to take action. There are so many needs in the world of childhood cancer, to list them all would take a lifetime but that's why we have this month. You could help with finding a cure for childhood cancer or helping a parent find the income they need to help their child receive lifesaving treatment. Or you could help give a kid with cancer their fight back...or give a little 9 year old girl hope that her sister might live when all seemed hopeless.

Special Love Shopping

With the holiday season around the corner, it's time to start thinking about holiday gifts for everyone, maybe even yourself! Special Love has created **3 ways** in which you can support our children and families AND get great stuff at the same time. Check it out!

1 Amazon Smile

Do you shop on Amazon? Did you know Special Love has an **Amazon Smile** account and can benefit from your purchase? For every purchase made on your Amazon Smile account, Special Love will get a small percentage in a donation from Amazon.

To set your account up, visit <https://smile.amazon.com> from your computer and select Special Love as your charity of choice, Amazon will do the rest. It's that easy!

Be sure and check out our **Wish List** too!

2 Apparel Store

Ever wish you could show everyone your Special Love spirit? Now you can purchase Special Love logo apparel. Visit our online store and have it shipped right to your home!

***Bonus* Special Love gets a small donation with every order!**

Visit www.speciallove.org/store for more info!



Scan Me!



3 RoundUp App

Now donating to Special Love is EVEN EASIER! We have partnered with the RoundUp App which allows users to simply round up their transactions to the nearest dollar, and donate that "loose change" to Special Love. All you have to do is download the app, select Special Love as your charity of choice, and make everyday purchases just as you normally would. That's it!

To get started, download the RoundUp App in your App Store or Google Play and set up your free account.



Humans of Special Love

Each September marks Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Special Love shared the stories of some of our campers, medical staff, and parents to show the impact our programs have on childhood cancer families. Here are excerpts of their stories.



Ansley Johnson, Camper

"I love Camp Fantastic! Being away from home is a little scary but I love camp, we do so many fun things. Camp magic means having fun going camping, playing, laughing, gaming, being with friends, spending time with my family away from the hospital, and most importantly—not thinking about cancer."



Lonz Sanders, YAC-er

"My parents found Special Love and participated in their Parent's Weekend. Other parents suggested I try a Young Adults Cancer (YAC) weekend, so I did and really enjoyed it. I even keep in touch with several other YAC members I met that weekend. Honestly I've never connected with so many people so fast."



Emma Snider, Camper

"You could help with finding a cure for childhood cancer or helping a parent find the income they need to help their child receive lifesaving treatment. Or you could help give a kid with cancer their fight back...or give a little 9 year old girl hope that her sister might live when all seemed hopeless."



Jyothi Raghavan, Parent

"During all our hospital stays the child life specialist Holly Senn would constantly talk about the organization Special Love and how she thought it would benefit Nitin. Still sick, he attended Camp Fantastic 5 years ago for the first time, with me calling Nurse Tammy every day to check on him. Now in his first year of college, Nitin intends to attend Camp Fantastic as counselor next year. I can't imagine what we would've done without Special Love."



Dr. Steve Chanock, M.D.

"The truth is, every day at camp is magical. It is the small moments of friendship and fellowship that remind me of the wonderful love and spirit of camp- where most of the silly conventions of adult behavior are left behind and all generations are inclusive and connected."



Tammy Jenkins, Nurse

"Being a part of this camp is the best piece of my job. I tell my parents it is a privilege you are allowing me to care for your child... you look me in the eye and tell me you trust me to take your child. Doing so is an enormous responsibility and the greatest privilege of my life."

To read their full stories, visit:
www.speciallove.org/humans



7th Annual Fall in Love 5K

On probably the only crisp fall morning in all of September in Washington DC, we welcomed more than 250 people to Canal Park, part of the Capitol Waterfront, for fun and some walking/running. This was a year of firsts for the 5K: the first year the event was not timed, new location, the introduction of family fun events, AND we **raised over \$33,000** for Special Love's programs!

To all our longtime participants and newcomers, sponsors and partners, THANK YOU! We were thrilled to welcome **NBC4 Meteorologist Chuck Bell** as our 5K emcee and participant. A new friend to Special Love, Chuck learned about Special Love at the IREM Gala in May (check out the summer newsletter). Chuck really brought life and fun to our short program, much like he does every morning on the news. We are also grateful for the many live on-air shout outs leading up to the big day. Thank you Chuck!

Borrowing the spotlight from Chuck from just a moment was former camper, now counselor and all around **Special Love ambassador Ryan Tomoff**. Ryan shared some of his cancer journey with our participants and how Special Love has been there at many points along the way of his cancer journey. Ryan is brave and confident and a true role model to other children and young adults we serve. Also onsite were our friends from **Big Head Little Body** face paint and balloon artists. Before and after the run you could see examples of their beautiful art from rocket and mouse ear balloon hats, to tiger stripes and sunflowers across the faces of our participants. We of course cannot forget **DJ NULIFE (aka former camper Malcolm Jones)** keeping the tunes spinning all morning who made sure from warm-up to closing we were moving and grooving, and new Camp Fantastic counselor, Michael Lawrence, who led participants in a warm-up before setting out on the 5K course.

Team Capital One, who broke records with **43 participants** continued their support of our children and families with our largest team ever!

Thank You to Our Sponsors

THE YUEN FOUNDATION

CLARK
CONSTRUCTION

iBiz
Vision & Innovation That Works

Simon Computing
Software Development Simplified



Hope to see you out at the 8th Annual Fall in Love 5K, Fall 2020!



2020 Chic & Campy Gala



Save the Date for
Special Love's
Annual Gala
Friday April 3, 2020
at the Hilton McLean
Tysons Corner in
McLean, VA.

Beneficiary Events in Review

Beneficiary events are one of the most common and fun ways organizations help Special Love through fundraising. They can be anything from a trivia night to a high-end gala, and all of the in-between. We are fortunate enough to have quite a few events throughout the year, here are just a few from the last quarter.

1812 Brewery Fundraiser

You had us at fresh brewed, but up in Cumberland, Maryland we aren't talking about coffee, we are talking about BEER. In July, the **1812 Brewery** (www.1812brewery.com) hosted its 2nd annual fundraiser for Special Love complete with a silent auction, 50/50 raffle, great brews and even a dunk tank. We hope the dunk tank returns next year, it was a riot!

Brewery owner, **Cory McCagh**, is part of a long line of Special Love volunteers, including his mother **Terri**, brother **Casey** and uncle **Brian**. Many more of the McCagh family were on-hand for the evening helping to put on the amazing event, raising more than **\$10,000** in support of Special Love's programs. **In just two years they have contributed more than \$20,000** by doing something many people love, drinking beer, listening to great music and visiting with friends. Think about what you could do at your favorite brewery or winery to support Special Love. No dunk tank required, but we sure appreciate all those dunked, including **Dr. Sean McCagh!**



Dr. Sean McCagh in the Dunk Tank!



Special Love Friday was a beautiful day!

Rocktober on the River

Catchy name for sure, but even better they could really bring the ROCK! We can't think of a better way to kick off October than being riverside of the beautiful Shenandoah River listening to rock n' roll on a crisp fall afternoon. The genres varied from classic rock to metal, but the talent was clear and all bands donated their time to this 4th annual event which has benefitted a new charity every year. This year we were very fortunate to have them choose Special Love after searching various nonprofits.

Darlene De Lorenzo, festival organizer, commented the next day it was our biggest fundraiser to date, raising just under \$5,000. We are flattered and grateful for the community coming together and being so generous. Thank you to all of the bands and volunteers, event organizers Darlene and Billy "Red" Reagan, Flip for handling the grill, and of course Bobby and Karen the owners of the gorgeous land where the event was held. Hope to see, or hear, you all next year!



More than 10 bands donated their time and talent throughout the day, rocking a covered stage with the beautiful Shenandoah River as a backdrop.



T-shirts commemorating the 4th Annual Rocktober on the River featuring our logo



Young rockers enjoying the bands after getting their faces painted



Members of each band signed a cymbal and gifted it to Special Love

IBEW Motorcycle Poker Run

Imagine waiting patiently at a restaurant then hearing off in the distance the rumble of more than **50 motorcycles** rolling in, quite the sight and sound! This very special group of riders are part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 26 Motorcycle Club. The **IBEW Local 26** spans from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Since 2010 the Local 26 has designated Special Love to receive the proceeds from their annual Poker Run, held every September. Over the past eight years, the club has raised more than \$80,000 in support of Special Love programming just by doing what they love to do, ride. A special thank you to **Jerry Lozupone**, our ambassador with the Local 26, and our favorite camp couple **Andrew and Carolyn Hubley** who shared with the riders and families at the end of the day's ride about what Special Love has meant in their lives.

We at Special Love continue to be grateful, and humbled, by all the amazing individuals and companies who come together to raise money through beneficiary events to support our families. We are fortunate to have them.

Kim Jappell and Andrew & Carolyn Hubley address the group



Motorcycles from the Poker Run lined up at the rally point

Interested in hosting your own Beneficiary Event? Contact Director of Development Kim Jappell - kjappell@speciallove.org

Spread Special Love Cheer

Special Love's Holiday Cards will brighten anyone's holiday. Designed by Special Love campers, each contain a photo of the artist and a short bio on the back, allowing you to share your support of our campers.

Cards are available for purchase on our website: www.speciallove.org/store

Cards will be sold in bundles:
 12 Cards (3 of each design) \$25
 24 Cards (6 of each design) \$45
 50 Cards (12 of each design +2) \$75
 100 Cards (25 of each design) \$100
 *envelopes included



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Camp Season Wrap-Up

BRASS Camp

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, the patient is not the only one affected, the entire family is. That is why we started up BRASS Camp, a week-long adventure for siblings who have a sibling currently on treatment or are bereaved. This year, BRASS hosted 107 campers in late-July at Camp Maria in Leonardtown, MD, where siblings have the adventures of crabbing (the campsite is along Breton Bay), canoeing, sports, crafts and so much more! Our musical camp theme this year was BRASSapoolooza. In keeping with our theme we welcomed the band, Groove Span, and country line dancers from Boot Scooters to really get the kids excited. The week also welcomed Disney characters our last night at camp to liven up our Disney themed dance. And what would camp be without an offsite adventure to the local water park and large inflatables one rec time afternoon. A great week was had by all!



Wrap-Up continued from page 6...



Camp Fantastic Wrap-Up

We hosted 100 pediatric oncology patients ages 7-17 in mid-August at the Northern VA 4-H Center in Front Royal, Virginia. Camp Fantastic gives the kids everything that makes a traditional camp so fun, like canoeing, sports, crafts, swimming, and campfires. There were also some new, fun activities such as karate, two escape rooms, and virtual reality gaming. All big hits with kids of every age. Our dedicated volunteers also provided 1-on-1 care as needed, so even the neediest children had the chance to try new activities and feel normal again.

While our days were filled with fun and educational classes, the evenings featured themed adventures and campfires where we sang and shared talents. Campers headed off to their rooms in time for a little "bunk talk" and a good night's sleep. Special thanks to our wonderful med staff, program volunteers, and the countless groups and individuals who came together for the common purpose of providing smiles and laughter to kids who really need them.



KOA Day

At the annual KOA Day, we had a record number of families, 12 families, 58 people total. The morning kicked off with fun crafts, and then everyone headed out for a hiking adventure. After lunch, families participated in various family centered activities, took advantage of the heated outdoor pool, the marshmallow bouncers and KOA's new Frisbee golf course. Late afternoon, families were treated to a fun petting zoo courtesy of the Teeny Tiny Farm, and the evening ended in true camp fashion of roasting marshmallows for s'mores at the fire pit. What a great day! Thank you to the families, volunteers, and especially KOA Williamsburg owners Donna & Gary Fout!



Octoberfest Weekend

Octoberfest Family Weekend is one of the most highly anticipated events of the year! We had 27 families join us for a full weekend of autumn activities for the whole family. Friday evening is our first social time, with families arriving at the 4-H Center in Front Royal, VA, arts and crafts, and our opening ceremony at Campfire. Saturday was a jam-packed day of activity! This year we shook things up and trekked to Wayside Farm Fun in Berryville, VA and everyone participated in hay rides, corn mazes, pumpkin cannons, pig races, and so much more! It was an incredible afternoon off-site, but the fun was just getting started! Back at the 4-H, we broke into classes and then it was time for wardrobe changes into our Halloween costumes for Trunk or Treat and the Halloween Dance! The weekend went way too fast, but it was an absolute blast getting everyone together once again for Fall fun!





117 Youth Development Ct. | Winchester, VA 22602
Phone 888.930.2707 | Fax 540.667.8144

WHAT'S UP NEXT

NOVEMBER 23-24

PARENTS GETAWAY WEEKEND

WINCHESTER, VA

DECEMBER 1

HOLIDAY PARTY

FRANCONIA, VA

2020

JANUARY 10-12

FANTASTIC WINTER WEEKEND

SHRINE MONT, ORKNEY SPRINGS, VA

JANUARY 17-20

SKI FAMILY WEEKEND

CANAAN RESORT, DAVIS, WV

MARCH 20-22

BRASS WEEKEND

4-H CENTER, FRONT ROYAL, VA

APRIL 3

CHIC & CAMPY GALA

HILTON MCLEAN TYSONS CORNER, MCLEAN, VA

Feel the Love?

Check out our social media channels to stay up-to-date on Special Love happenings.

-  @Specialovecamps
-  @Specialove_org
-  @Specialove_org
-  @Specialove_org
-  @Specialovecamps



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www.Speciallove.org

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