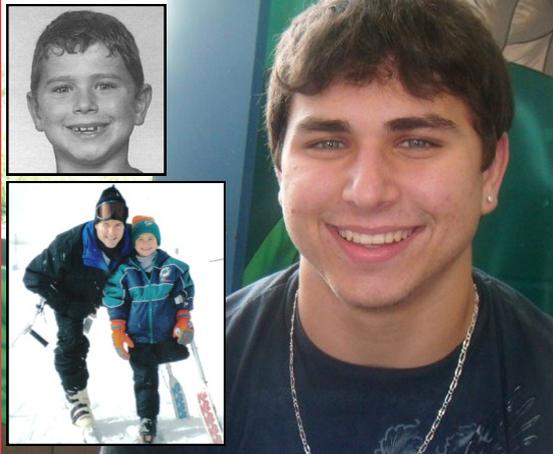


30 Years & 30 Heroes

Hero #13 of 30



Top: David in his first year at Camp Fantastic, three-tracking with volunteer Larry Chloupek, and today. Bottom: David (from left) attending his sister Nicole's graduation last year with parents Andrea and David, Sr., and sister Janel.

"I could finally be a kid again." That's how David ("DJ" to his close friends and family) remembers his first trip to camp in 1999. Feeling normal was important to him, especially since he'd undergone the amputation of his left leg as part of his treatment for synovial sarcoma in 1997. And once he got to camp, he never slowed down—in fact, he remembers feeling sorry for his counselors, who had to keep up with him and his friend and fellow first-timer, TeJay. "We gave them so many problems," he recalls, "I don't think they rested that whole week." David's family joined the fun, attending many of Special Love's weekend camps, including Ski Family Weekend, where they watched David learn to three-track using outriggers (miniature skis on poles). His sisters, Nicole and Janel, rose through the ranks of BRASS Camp, Special Love's program just for siblings, and Nicole will serve on this year's camp staff. (Janel is adjusting to married life, having volunteered at both BRASS and Camp Fantastic.) David sums up the impact of camp like this:

"I was so young but going through so many emotions, feeling lost and like I was the only person going through it. Camp changed my life in so many ways — it let me be free with no worries of what was going on with my health, no worries that I might get hurt; I could finally be a kid again. Camp Fantastic was the highlight of my summer and it made me appreciate life in a whole new way. As soon as I could, I jumped at the opportunity to become a counselor and give back to an AMAZING organization that has given me so much!"

David is currently living in (and will travel to CF 2012 from) Hawaii, where he's pursuing a degree in marketing and works for Oakley sunglasses.

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 **30th Anniversary**
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