



Twins Maddy and Jack are all smiles at camp. “Sunrise is a special and amazing place,” says their father, Joe.

Happy Camp



Making Inferences As you read these articles, what can you infer about how other people can help kids with cancer?

LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 6 TERMS IN BOLD



It's 10:20 a.m., and the sun is shining through a canopy of trees onto red bleachers. Three hundred kids, ages 3 to 16, sit shoulder-to-shoulder, smiling and chanting to the beat of bongo drums.

“Suuuuunrise Day Camp! Iiiiiit's the best camp!”

Like kids at camps around the country, Sunrise campers spend days swimming, making crafts, shooting hoops, and playing miniature golf. Laughter echoes across the camp's 300

wooded acres on Long Island in New York.

But while Sunrise looks like a typical day camp, it is unique. Founded in 2006, it is the only full-summer day camp in the world for kids with cancer and their siblings.

Cancer is rare among children. And the vast majority of kids **diagnosed** with cancer survive to live normal lives.

But as many Sunrise campers know, cancer is one of the most frightening and difficult experiences a child—and family—can have. As

Happy Campers

For kids with cancer and their siblings, Sunrise Day Camp offers fun in the sun with a special twist

BY JANE BIANCHI

Nya (left) and her sister Miah get creative at the arts-and-crafts table.



Sunrise founder Arnie Preminger points out, kids facing cancer are coping with challenges that most people can't begin to imagine. There are surgeries. Most cancers require a treatment known as **chemotherapy**, which can leave kids weak and tired—and often temporarily bald. Many miss weeks or even months of school, and have to trade soccer games and sleepovers for endless waits in doctors' offices and midnight trips to the emergency room.

When a kid becomes a cancer patient, it

can be difficult to feel like anything *but* a cancer patient.

But not at Sunrise.

At the camp, kids can enjoy the usual camp activities—with a twist. Counselors give piggyback rides and swimming lessons. But they all also wear hats or bandanas to look the same

as kids who are covering up their bald heads. Nurses hand out Band-Aids and ice packs for scrapes and bumps. But they also help kids who are taking medications during the day. The camp has a swimming pool and soccer field and tennis courts. But it also has quiet spots in the shade for kids who are tired, or whose treatments make them sensitive to the sun.

And the cost to families? It's free. Sunrise raises millions of dollars each year from private **donations**, which cover everything from staff salaries and golf carts to arts and crafts.

Set Apart

For Preminger and the Sunrise team, the idea is to create an environment where kids coping with cancer can **thrive**, surrounded by people who understand their unique experiences and daily challenges.

Kids with cancer and other **chronic** illnesses often feel set apart or even misunderstood. Miah, 11, remembers returning to school after treatment for her cancer. "I had lost my hair, and whenever I walked into the girls' bathroom, kids would think I was a boy, and I'd hear them say, 'Why is a guy walking into the girls' bathroom?'"

At Sunrise, kids with cancer and their siblings can connect with other kids facing similar challenges.

At Sunrise, there are no such awkward moments. Indeed, it's this feeling of community that campers and their families value most.

And, of course, there's the daily ice cream, which is what 8-year-old camper Maddy appreciates. She and her twin brother, Jack, were diagnosed when they were 2 years old. Happily, both are now in remission (that

means that the cancer has gone away). They have a blast at Sunrise.

"Sunrise is a special and amazing place for the children and the parents," says their father, Joe. "The whole family feels safe there."

As Jack and Maddy's dad points out, when cancer hits, the entire family feels the blow. Even when

families have **health insurance**, they often still have to pay tens of thousands of dollars for doctor visits, hospital stays, ambulance rides, surgeries, and treatment. Some parents have to cut back on their work hours—or even quit their jobs altogether—to take care of a sick child who needs extra care and support.

And, of course, there is the agonizing worry for parents—and siblings.

"I'd be watching TV and start talking to



Sunrise campers enjoy the same activities as kids at other day camps. Above, sisters Julia (left) and Camryn cool off in the pool.

her,” says Miah’s sister, Nya, 12, “but then realize that she wasn’t there next to me. I’d forget she was at the hospital.” (Miah is now in remission.)


“A Unique Gift”

Twelve-year-old Camryn remembers the terror she felt when her sister, Julia, now 10, was diagnosed with cancer. Camryn did everything she could to distract Julia and make her feel better during the long months of treatments.

But like many kids whose siblings are ill, Camryn often felt sidelined when the family’s attention was focused on Julia. “I was like, um, hi, I’m over here!” Now that Julia is in remission, Camryn can shrug off those feelings.

“Sunrise gives siblings a unique gift,” says camp director Deanna Slade. “They have an opportunity to play and interact as other brothers and sisters do in a very normal, fun way. It also helps them better understand and deal with their brother or sister’s illness and their own feelings.”

The success of the camp can be measured in more than just the smiles of the campers as they chant out the camp’s name on a summer day. In the summer of 2013, Sunrise opened its second day camp in Pearl River, New York. And Preminger and his team are now helping other organizations open similar camps.

“I love looking at the kids and seeing how happy they are,” Preminger says. “I love watching them forget that they have cancer, even for a moment.” 

INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Bald Heads Raise Big Bucks

People work to help kids coping with cancer in many ways. Perhaps the most unusual way was thought up by an organization called the St. Baldrick’s Foundation. Since 1999, St. Baldrick’s has raised more than \$220 million for childhood cancer research by inspiring thousands of people to shave their heads.

Many “shavees” are kids like sisters Kaela and Mara, who shaved their heads for St. Baldrick’s last year. They did it not only to raise money, but to show support for kids with cancer, who often lose their hair during chemotherapy treatments.

The program is simple: Volunteers commit to shaving their heads and invite family and friends to show their support by donating money. Some kids form teams. Kaela and Mara enlisted their dad and brother and a classmate. Their team raised \$4,100 for St. Baldrick’s. Their hair is growing back, but not for long. They’re already getting ready for another shaving event next year.



WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

The word *empathy* means to understand and share the feelings of others. Use details from both articles to explain how people show empathy for kids with cancer. How might empathy be important?

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