



Hunter, in the green shirt, joins his cabin friends and counselors for a cheer during his first Cardiology Camp in July 2017.

## FROM FEAR TO HIGH FIVES: YOU ARE MAKING A LASTING DIFFERENCE

When Hunter was three, he underwent surgery to repair his heart.

The operation was a success: His chest pain disappeared. He stopped wheezing. He gained weight.

Even so, his life was far from healed.

The operation left a six-inch “zipper” scar on his chest. He tried his best to hide it, always wearing a shirt when he swam. He got breathless if he walked too fast and lagged behind his friends. He didn’t feel like a normal kid.



**“These kids deserve to have moments that take their breath away that aren’t heart related. Thank you to everybody who gives to make camp possible.”**

- Denise, Hunter’s Mom

His parents, Denise and Jeff, worried about their son all the time. They took extra precautions, monitoring what he ate and making sure he drank enough water. Instead of babysitters, they left Hunter in the care of family members. He never went to a friend’s house for a sleepover. He rarely went on play dates.

**Worry and fear: They take a toll on the whole family when a child has a life-threatening medical condition.**

Now imagine those fears amplified when parents like Denise and Jeff send their child away to camp for the very first time. “We were scared,” she says. “But we could see it was an amazing opportunity for him to realize he’s

not the only one out there with heart issues.”

Hunter’s first week at Cardiology Camp in 2017 was everything his mom and dad hoped it would be. He fished, paddled, swam, sang and danced. He bonded with kids just like him and no longer felt ashamed of his zipper scar because his new camp friends had them too.

**Hunter’s camp experience also helped him conquer a big fear.**

His wasn’t a life-or-death fear like his parents’ (what happens if our child has a medical emergency). It was an ordinary childhood fear: being terrified of thunderstorms.

Early during his first camp week, as lightning flashed in the sky, Hunter’s cabin counselor, Mike Scarborough, could see that Hunter was afraid. Mike remembered playing “Thunder Buddies” with his father when he was kid. He went over to Hunter and offered to be his Thunder Buddy. He showed Hunter the secret handshake. He reminded Hunter that Thunder Buddies helped chase away other

fears too. If you simply imagined your buddy, then you were no longer alone. “It helped me not be nervous,” says Hunter.

Hunter has returned to North Star Reach the past two summers, and he and his family have also attended Cardiology Family Camp. He’s had many opportunities to reunite with Mike, who is a pre-med student at Oakland University and a frequent program volunteer despite his demanding school schedule. “It’s been amazing to see how much he’s grown,” says Mike, “and to know I’ve had an opportunity to play a role in his life.”

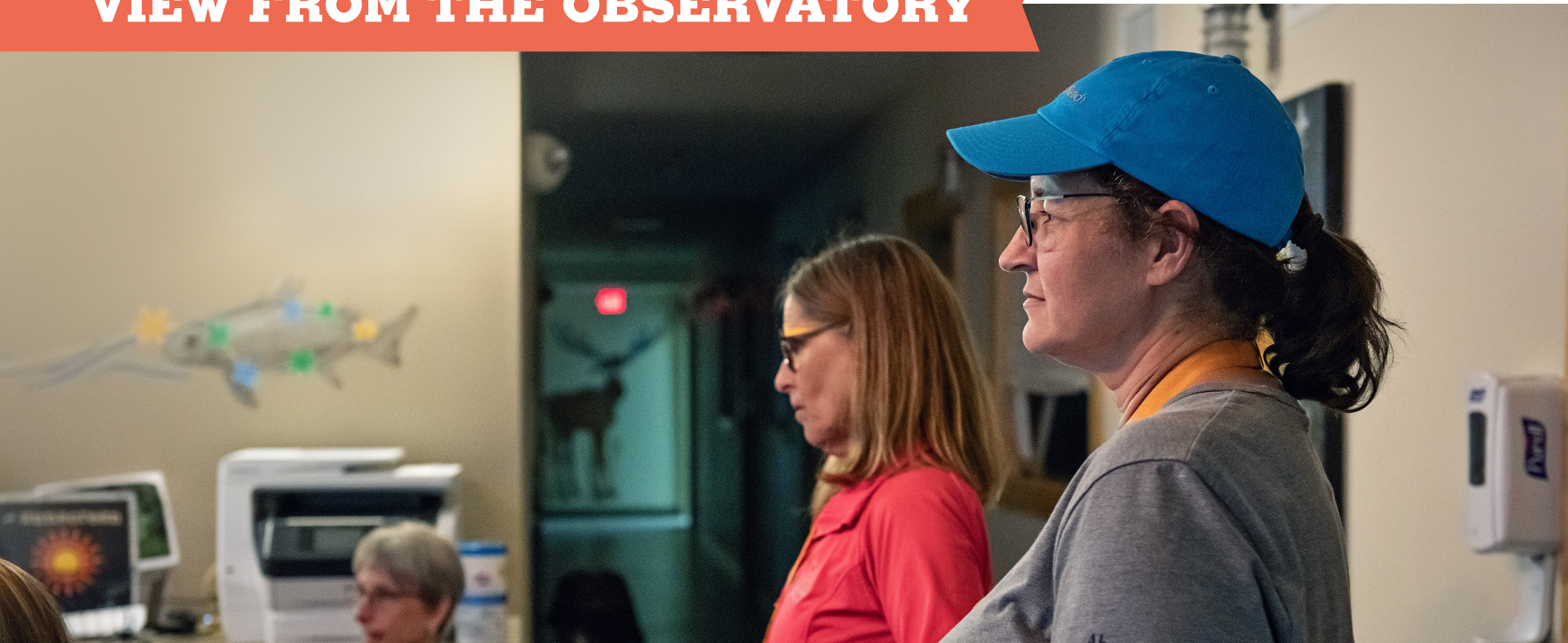
**Your generous support creates a unique place where children with extraordinary medical challenges can feel like ordinary kids, often for the first time in their lives.** A place offering expert medical care, providing peace of mind for camper parents. And a place where exceptional people come together to create healing connections for deserving kids. These are truly life-changing gifts to families like Denise and Jeff’s.



Hunter, age 9, with his Thunder Buddy, Mike, at Cardiology Camp this summer.



# VIEW FROM THE OBSERVATORY



Health Center Director Lauren Cannistraro (right) works year-round to manage The Observatory. Above, she is pictured with Medical Director Dr. Rebecca Patrias.

*On a typical summer day at North Star Reach, the medical support that makes camp possible for kids with serious health challenges isn't always visible--and that's by design. Led by Health Center Director Lauren Cannistraro, daily medical operations are intended to run behind-the-scenes, with as little disruption as possible to the campers' activities. This approach requires an incredible amount of coordination and management of complex systems, from medication management to building a supportive culture for top-notch medical volunteers.*

A veteran nurse who worked at University of Michigan's Mott's Children's Hospital for 14 years, Lauren, does everything from making sure that every camper's medical chart is accurate and up to date and organizing top-notch medical professionals who volunteer at camp to building efficient systems that keep The Observatory humming along. She sat down to share a little bit about herself, and her first summer as Health Center Director.

**Tell us about your previous work experiences.**

I worked at Mott's Children's Hospital in general pediatric surgery, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, urology,

cardiology, and cardiothoracic surgery. I ended up in orthopedic surgery. I was really proud to work there with those surgeons.

Before nursing, I was a biologist. I worked at a Girl Scout camp in the Florida Keys as their marine biology specialist. I worked with animals for quite a few years, and really enjoyed the camp setting. Then, after becoming an animal nurse, I decided that I wanted to become a people nurse and I went back to school for nursing.

Here at North Star Reach, I'm able to take my love of nature, my camping experiences and my love of nursing and really put them all together.

**What have you loved about working here at North Star Reach?**

North Star Reach is the biggest group of genuine people all in one place. When you bring that many genuine people into one place, it's so heartwarming. It makes you want to do better. It makes you want to do more. That's one of the reasons this role is so rewarding to me.

**Would you tell us about a powerful experience you've had this summer?**

One of the most magical moments was in one of the first sessions. I was taking a kiddo who had a walker to the dining hall in a golf cart, and I asked him if he wanted to go see the treehouse. As we pulled up to the treehouse and he realized he was capable of going inside it. He looked at me and said, "I can go in there!?" He was so excited! —he wasn't expecting it to be accessible. Here at North Star Reach, kids are able to participate, and without fear.

Here's another one. At family camp, one camper had brain surgery not long before camp. She had a bandana around her head, and she didn't have any hair. Another camper had had that same surgery. They were talking to each other and she said, "Your hair is going to grow back." She was just showing her that things do get better. It's so great just to watch the kids help each other and to grow on their own.

*When she's not at camp, Lauren lives in Dexter, Michigan with her family— her husband Joel, daughter West, son Michael, and a host of animals including Kyla, a chocolate lab; Cassie, a silver lab; Foster, a cat; and three birds—Lucy, Lex and Pita.*

## EXTRAORDINARY MEDICAL CARE = PEACE OF MIND FOR CAMPER FAMILIES

The quality medical care provided to our campers wouldn't be possible without our generous donors and volunteers. Here are just a few numbers to illustrate the incredible effort and generosity that fueled the medical care delivered to campers this summer.



- \$150,000** = total value of medical services donated by MDs, RNs, NPs, PAs and Child Life Specialists during the 2019 summer season
- 9,700+** total medications delivered to campers during six summer sessions: **3,222** medications during Transplant Camp | **1,101** medications during Solstice Camp | **2,011** medications during Cardiology Camp | **1,487** medications during Epilepsy Camp | **1,556** medications during Sickle Cell/Hematology/Pain Management Camp | **350** medications during Sibling Camp
- 50+** medical conditions supported by our medical teams



# THE IMPACT OF CAMP

## YOU'RE HELPING TO CHANGE LIVES, ONE CAMPER AT A TIME

*Here are just a few voices (among hundreds)  
from our camper parents and volunteers about  
the incredible impact of the 2019 summer camp  
season.*

**"I don't even know where to begin with how wonderful this camp is. My daughter attended the camp for epilepsy. She has literally talked non-stop about how much fun she had at camp and wants to go back next year."**

*-Angela, Camper Mom*

**"Another week full of love. Laughter. And mooseness. Grateful for everything North Star Reach does for children and so incredibly grateful for all it's done for me."**

*-Cristina, Program Volunteer*

**"I left camp with a renewed sense of why I am a nurse and even a greater appreciation for the little things in life."**

*-Jaclyn, Medical Volunteer*

**"These boys taught me joy, love, patience and most importantly to be forever grateful for every moment we have on this earth,"**

*-Molly, Medical Volunteer*



## "RAISE A LITTLE CONSCIOUSNESS. RAISE A LITTLE HELL!"

North Star Reach Founder and CEO, Doug Armstrong, recently won the prestigious James T. Neubacher Award for his lifelong commitment to creating accessible, inclusive camp experiences for children with serious illnesses. Presented annually by The University of Michigan's Council for Disability Concerns, the award recognizes U-M faculty, staff, students or alumni who demonstrate a commitment to removing barriers to full participation for people with disabilities. It was created in honor of Neubacher, a U-M alumnus who lived with multiple sclerosis and was a columnist for the *Detroit Free Press* and an advocate for equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. In one of his most-well known columns, Neubacher encouraged others to increase awareness of disability-related issues with these eight words: "Raise a little consciousness. Raise a little hell!"



# DONOR GIFTS CREATES NEW OUTDOOR ADVENTURES FOR CAMPERS

Outdoor adventure programming expanded in a big way this summer, with the unveiling of two new Yurts. Situated on a rustic campsite along the shores of Woodburn Lake, the Yurts are a short walk from the main center of camp. During Cardiology Camp, the oldest campers were among the first to sleep overnight inside the structures. The special Outpost evenings also included songs, stories and roasting marshmallows around a campfire. The Yurts were made possible with a generous gift from the Buhr Family Foundation, Delta Air Lines Mechanics, Jan Herrick and SeriousFun Children’s Network. We are indebted to them for creating a space where generations of campers will have a chance to sleep under the night sky, some for the very first time.



Before embarking on a hike through the woods to sleep inside the Yurts, campers completed challenges to earn their “Mooseness Explorer” badge. Jason shows off the flags that were also on hand to cheer on the fun.



## SERIOUSFUN NEWS

Our summer camp sessions were made even sweeter, thanks to a new partnership between **SeriousFun Children’s Network** and **Krispy Kreme Doughnuts**. Along with raising funds and awareness for all SeriousFun camps at participating shops in the U.S., Krispy Kreme hosted a doughnut dipping station at North Star Reach this summer. The dipping station tradition started more than a decade ago at SeriousFun camp Victory Junction, located in North Carolina, also home to Krispy Kreme corporate headquarters. Thank you, Krispy Kreme and SeriousFun, for sharing some seriously awesome Krispy Kreme doughnuts with our campers and volunteers—and helping to spread the word about the power of camp, one delicious doughnut at a time.



### Upcoming Events

**Studio 54, Cause for a Party**  
LIVE Nightclub, Ann Arbor, MI  
Saturday, November 2, 2019

**GivingMooseDay**  
24-hour day of “Love the Mooseness”  
on social media  
Tuesday, December 3, 2019

**Detroit Pistons Game**  
Little Caesars Arena, Detroit, MI  
Monday, January 27, 2020

### Stay Connected With Us!

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