

Camp HOPE is Love

On March 3, 2015, the doorbell rang and my life was forever changed. My beautiful husband, Joe, had died by suicide while traveling out of state. I was now a solo parent to three children, ages 11, 8, and 6. Shock is a pretty intense defensive mechanism, it's amazing how our bodies protect us so we are able to just simply keep breathing. After a few days, I was able to open a folder given to me by the county, in it were resources for grieving families, children and adults; including a pamphlet for Camp HOPE. I became determined to really do grief right, I was going to plow through and use every resource, every camp, every book, therapist, and prayer that I could so we could make it to the other side and move on. At just 3 weeks out, I sent in our registrations for the May weekend at Camp HOPE. It was the single best decision I made for myself and my children in the first year of loss. Grief is so incredibly isolating, especially in the beginning. And really, I was only 36, widows aren't in their 30's and my kids were not supposed to grow up without their amazing dad. What we learned at Camp HOPE is that we are not alone. At first, it is devastating to know that other people are feeling a similar pain to yours. Never would anyone that has lost someone dear to them ever wish that pain on another. Hearing other stories of loss and hearing other stories of survival is so humbling and empowering. I wish I could have really seen what my kids went through in those short 36 hours. I know they cried on the way home, not wanting to leave, talking about friendships made and amazing counselors who hugged them and played football with them and sang them to sleep. They begged to come back. We were able to return for reunion camp in February of 2016. It felt like coming home, warm and cozy and welcoming. We once again walked away renewed and loved and feeling not quite so isolated. Since then, I have



had the honor to return to camp as a photographer and adult counselor. As I photographer, I was really able to see all sides of camp. Let me tell you, Camp HOPE is Love. Pure and simple. Laughter and tears combined; equally healing, equally accepted by those who surround you. The kids are amazing! Camp HOPE strives to let these beautiful young souls just be a kid for 36 hours. Playing, climbing, swimming, boating...and lots of cookies. As an adult counselor, I met an amazing group of men and women who were caring for grieving kids. I felt honored to listen to their stories, to share their pain and hold space for them to just breathe. I came to give back, but those incredible men and women filled up my cup! Even through the pain, we can give each other hope. We are approaching almost 4 years since Joe died. I've learned grief doesn't end, there is no right or wrong way to grieve, no magical time frame and that the hole in our lives will forever exist. However, opening my heart to other people's grief and experiencing another person holding space for my grief has most certainly made the waves a bit more navigable. Camp HOPE will forever hold a special place in our lives. We walked away knowing we were not alone in our journey with grief.

Jana Peters
Adult Camper/Volunteer, Camp HOPE



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*A camp experience for
children and their
families after the death
of a loved one*

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Here Again, in a New Light

So here I am again. In the land of dying and grief. My dad, Norm Kraemer, died this past August. He lived 94 years, and I had him for all of my 56 years. He was one of the good guys. My two brothers and four sisters and I won the lottery with dads. We all saw this coming. Then why am I so sad?

As I did 29 years ago after my daughter's death, I am back to scouring through books and blogs and prayers. I just finished a book, *Proof of Heaven*, by Neuroscientist Eben Alexander. Searching. My body is battling itself with weird rashes, headaches, low grade fevers and cold sores. Nothing tastes very good. My concentration is null and void. Last week I stepped out of the shower without rinsing the shampoo out of my hair. I bought Maple Nut ice cream. I don't even know if I like it anymore but I remember it was one of my dad's favorites. I know I'm going to have to reread the last book I set down.

And then I went to Camp HOPE.

The fall Camp is a beautiful mix of crisp air and leaves of all colors, some sun, some rain. It is my space, my people, my heart. Our hearts



collectively hurt there. I don't know how many tissues we go through. I experienced Camp in a new light. The first time, 29 years ago, I came from a place of shock, feeling numb and in a deep sadness I'd never experienced after Sara died. And I came to run the camp, be the Director and all. This time, I came with 29 years of experience with grieving families, but I felt like I was one of our campers. I was a little afraid. Feeling this vulnerable is scary. Going into a place where I will have to talk about my dad and his death and all that means is rough. My mom, my sisters and brothers and I will never smell that Half & Half tobacco from his pipe again.

Because he was 94, of course dad knew about death and grief. He would tell me about the way his dad, a carpenter, built the simple wooden caskets for his own young daughters. He talked about the way he and his mom talked before her death. As a child, I watched the way he took care of my mom when her mom died, and as he grieved his brothers and sisters and dad, and friends that were like family. He was not a man who cried openly, but he showed his feelings in subtle ways. The way he helped me after Sara died was a never ending demonstration of love.

So Camp HOPE came at the perfect time. We laughed and played and ate a ton of food that isn't that great for us, but it's comfort food so enough said. Even though it was for a short time, it is enough to sustain me for a long while.

What our Camp HOPE families have taught me is that shared grief is so much healthier for us. I shared my dad with the campers. They listened to me as I told stories about him as my dad, as a successful construction business owner who started with nothing and who became known across the country, as a devoted son and brother, as a hands on and most generous grandpa, and as a husband worth his weight in gold.

I cried all the way to Camp.

I smiled all the way home. Camp HOPE works. It works in the most subtle and beautiful ways.

Becky Loy
President, Camp HOPE

WINTER 2019

*Please help us to continue
providing free services
to grieving children and
their families. Remember
Camp HOPE with your
giving. We are a non-profit,
501(c)3 organization.*

DID YOU KNOW?
*Since 1989, we have
served over 4500 grieving
children & teens.*



Norman and Louise Kraemer

Camp HOPE welcomes all people as they are. We are an LGBTQ+ Ally.

Thank you to Spectra Print, Stevens Point, for the donation of the design and printing of this newsletter.
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Casting for Hope Celebrates the Life of Ari Porat

On a cold, windy and even snowy day in late October, over 20 musky fishing boats set out on Random Lake to participate in the 12th annual fundraising event, Casting for Hope. The event is a musky fishing tournament in which proceeds are donated to Camp HOPE. This year the weather was absolutely brutal with 30 mph winds and flurries turning to whiteout conditions, but thankfully the participants were tough and the fish still cooperated. It was a record year with two of the largest muskies caught in the tournament's history at 44 and 46 inches!

Casting for Hope celebrates the life of Ari Porat, who passed away in 2000 at age 21 from spinal cancer. Ari's youngest sister had attended Camp HOPE after his death. When Ari's family was approached by his friends, Brad Weckwerth and Erik Miller, to hold an event in his memory, his parents asked that any proceeds benefit Camp HOPE. Over the course of the 12 years, Casting for Hope has donated nearly \$50,000 to Camp HOPE! That dedication has helped us bring many children to Camp, giving them the chance to go fishing and boating, make crafts, eat cookies, light a candle in memory of their loved one, snuggle with therapy dogs and share a lot of smiles with new friends who know what it's like to feel the overwhelming grief of losing someone close to them.

This was the first time I had experienced Casting for Hope and traveled about 2 hours to attend. When I arrived at Kegger's Pub & Grill, where the awards ceremony was held, I walked into a cozy and warm establishment. A group of tournament participants had just come out from the cold, telling animated stories and laughing about their challenging but wonderful day on the lake. I was greeted by smiles and friendly faces eager to tell me about their love of Ari and his family, their love of fishing and how proud they are to raise money for Camp HOPE.

After meeting Ari's parents and friends, I took a few minutes to speak to the group, sharing my own experience and the impact Camp has on our campers and their families. As I looked into the crowd, I saw tears in

their eyes, smiles of encouragement and nods in agreement. Their love of fishing and honoring the life of someone they love has helped inspire hope to many grieving children and their families every year. Thank you to Brad, Erik, Ari's parents and all participants of every Casting for Hope event. It was my pleasure and an honor to join you this year.



Brad Weckwerth

If you are interested in participating in this tournament in the future, please visit www.castingforhope.com for more information.

*Mariah Singer-Brown
Director, Camp HOPE*

What Campers Say

I just got home from this camp and I cannot say enough good things. My boys had an amazing time and even made a friend who ended up being local. For any parents that send their children, I cannot urge you strongly enough to consider attending the adult session. It was such a strong sense of community and support for the adults who have also suffered loss. They are memories I will treasure and I can't wait until our February reunion camp!"

- April Coleman, adult camper



"Before Camp HOPE, I thought me and my sister were the only kids in the world that had a dad that died."

- 9 year-old camper



"Amazing space and even better people. This camp is doing great things, helping people grow and heal with such a presence of peace and allowance. We are so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it."

- Kari Folk, adult camper

Many of the gifts received were given in tribute and recognition of special individuals. All gift tributes are noted by the *italicized names* after the donor's name.

THANK YOU

Dianne Parker & Darin Heyerdahl, Neenah

Gerald J & Armella Ring Family Foundation, Madison

The Victor & Christine Anthony Family Foundation, Waupaca

"I learned about Camp HOPE when you spoke to the Waupaca Rotary Club. I was very impressed with the program you offer children who have experienced the loss of a significant person in their life. We hope you find this gift useful and that it helps build on the good work that Camp HOPE does."

Julie & Lee Lampert, Wisconsin Rapids

"Thank you for all you do!"

Trevor & Kristen Zimmerman, Fort Atkinson

Aurora Health Care including, Sheryl Hawkins, Kathleen & Steve

Gruszecki and Roberta Ashby

Tom & Soni Kraemer, Plain

Robert & Karen McDonald, Stevens Point

Bernie & Mitzi Hlavac, Stevens Point

Amy Schneider, Wautoma

Sarah Buice, Amherst

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Shari Diehl, Prairie du Sac

Chamomile & Benjamin Nusz, Amherst

Junior Womens Club of Stevens Point

Mary Berard, Stevens Point

Joan & Joe Bickelhaupt, Oshkosh

"Love and hugs to all of you - you are so special and we appreciated Camp HOPE at a time when we felt completely lost."

Filtz Trucking Inc, Custer

Curtis Hossman, Lodi

Eric Beuerman, Madison

Jim & Marcie Lyons, Columbus, IN

Lycon Inc, Janesville

McCaslin Lioness Club, Lakewood

Eden Lions Club

Costco Wholesale, Oak Brook, IL

Sharon Baganz, Pewaukee

Amherst Area Foundation/Jensen Community Center, Amherst

Cody & Rachel Faust, Williams Bay

Hancock Lions Club

Beverly & Duane Pede, Amherst Junction

Kathleen Basten-Sturm, Manitowoc

Lisa Radomski, Stevens Point

Ashwaubenon Lioness Club

Lindsay Dickert, Oconomowoc

Mar & Paul Garber, Iola

Nicholas Milburn, New York, NY

Kenneth Schnell, Cleveland

Mukwonago Lions Foundation, Inc

Arnott Lions Club

Lionel Baxter, Avoca

Kraemer Brothers, Plain

"We hope that you will continue your effort for many years to come, because there are always a lot of children who will need Camp HOPE and its outstanding support."

Jonathan Bushman/Monsanto Fund, Wittenberg

Sue Iverson, Janesville

Tomorrow River Lioness, Amherst

United Way

Morgan Washburn, Bel Air, MD

St Francis Xavier Catholic Schools, Appleton

John Kaufman, Manitowoc

Stevens Point Area Coop

Living Well Yoga, Stevens Point

Teri Webb, Nekoosa

Robert & Patricia Endries Family Foundation Future Generations Fund, Appleton

Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin

Marion Lioness

St Bronislava Parish, Plover

Waupaca Lioness Club

Ivory Stone Properties, Eagle River

Karen Ghinazzi, Watersmeet, MI

Lioness Club of Greater Kenosha

Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region

Frame Memorial Presbyterian Church, Stevens Point

Pearl Engineering Corporation, Wisconsin Rapids

Eric Beuerman, Madison

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James & Martha Robertson, Springfield, VA

Robert's Rendezvous, Amherst

Bernadine Limmex, Spring Green

Jean Schnick, DeForest

Bonnie Kraemer, Madison

James & Rita Pavlacic, Peoria, IL

Lawrence & Rosemary Schmitz, Wausau

Ed & Sharon Bettinger, Plain

Herb & Linda Paulus, Plain

IN MEMORY

Joe & Bev Cull, Pewaukee, *Patrick May*

Rich Leider, Fond du Lac, *John "Vennie" Venturini*

Alice Swinehart, Spring Green, *Bob Loy*

Lisa & Jeff Dickmann, Fond du Lac, *Brian Leider, Sweet Grandma Grace and John "Vennie" Venturini*

The Hall Family, Phoenix, AZ, *Casey Lee Thomas*

"All the best, from our hearts to yours."

Susan Nock, New York, NY, *Casey Thomas*

Richard Frame, Fort Atkinson, *Dan Hebert*

Vicki & Matt Beglinger, Mount Horeb, *Daryn Allen*

Rita Ross, Lewisville, NC, *Dave Persichini*

Mary Conarchy, Greendale, *Dick Thomas*

"This donation is offered in gratitude for the opportunity to attend Camp HOPE and as a memorial to my husband and grandson's grandfather."

Connie Barbian, Fort Atkinson, *Ella Traska*

Helke Funeral Home, Wausau, *Grace Lobacz, Ruth Kluetz*

Rosalind Boville, Greenfield, *James Michael Robertson, Ramona L. Robertson, Mark E. Metzner*

John Johnson, *John "Vennie" Venturini*

Bill Stoffel, *John "Vennie" Venturini*

Theresa Sandok, Greenfield, *John Stewart*

Donna Warzynski, Stevens Point, *John Stewart*

Carolyn McGinley, Plover, *John Stewart*

Carol Stewart, Plover, *John Stewart*

Thomas & Donna Hayes, Marshfield, *John Stewart*

J & D Schickert, Plover, *John Stewart*

David & Maria Koch, Plover, *John Stewart*

Rose & Thomas Jirous, Stevens Point, *John Stewart*

David & Roseann Rosin, Plover, *John Stewart*

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Paul & Debbie Key, Hustisford, *Norman Wilke*

Jeffery J. Scott, Platteville, *Norman Wilke*

Kathy & John Busch, Stevens Point, *Norman Wilke*

J. A. Larsen, Amherst Junction, *Norman Wilke*

Ann & John Larsen, Plover, *Norman Wilke*

Francine & Arnold Rask, Mount Horeb, *Norman Wilke*

Jeffery & Ellen Wedige, Platteville, *Norman Wilke*

Mark & Bonnie Freiberg, Stevens Point, *Norman Wilke*

Nancy & Lawrence Turba, Wisconsin Rapids, *Norman Wilke*

Alan & Darlene Bembenek, Junction City, *Norman Wilke*

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Shelley & Phil Hummel-Dosmann, Milwaukee, *Lydia Rose Hummel-Dosmann*

Dorothy Tautges, Marshfield, *Jeremy Hilton Tautges*

IN HONOR OF

Maureen McNulty Panke, St Paul, MN, *Betty McNulty*

Callie Lauer, Sussex, *Matt Lukomski*

Debbie Payne, East Troy, *Diane & Steve Church*

Bridget & Jared Kufner, Appleton, *Sandy & Bill Butelewski*

Tina Wyss Aldrich, Janesville, *Bobby and Brianna Wyss*

"Thank you for all you do."

SPECIAL APPRECIATION FOR OUR FUNDRAISERS

Casting for HOPE, Brookfield

Always in our Hearts Walk/Run, East Troy

Wisconsin Club Managers Golf Tournament, Milwaukee

Camp HOPE Classic Golf Tournament, Stevens Point

Slopes for HOPE at Homestead High School, Mequon

"We enjoyed raising the money for your program. We look forward to doing it again next year."

Ernie Open Annual Golf Tournament, Plover

A heartfelt thank you to all of our anonymous donors.

A special thank you to our family and friends who donated in memory of Norman Kraemer. We are grateful for your generosity in memory of this wonderful man. Thank you for honoring his life by helping grieving children throughout the state of Wisconsin.