

Making Memories: Family Summer Camp Creates Magical Moments for Children Facing Life-threatening Medical Conditions

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SCOTTSVILLE, KY (July 16, 2015) – Scottsville, Ky., may not sound like a magical vacation spot, but for the Collins family from Marietta, Ga., it is.

The Collins' know when they roll through the gates of The Center for Courageous Kids (CCK) the stresses of everyday life are on hold. This is their time, their place to enjoy the fun that families without medically fragile children do...free of charge.

“It’s a much needed break from our normal lives and the hectic pace of school, work, doctor’s appointments, treatments,” says Courtney Collins. “It gives our family a chance to focus on having fun and spending time together, but we still know that the trained staff can handle all of the medical needs that might occur.”

Collins' 10-year-old son has many medical challenges, including epilepsy and primary immune deficiency. He takes daily medication and every three weeks receives a blood product called IViG for his immune deficiency, something he'll continue for his lifetime. Her 14-year-old daughter has asthma.

“On a social level, it's great for my kids to be around others who have similar medical challenges and understand what our daily lives are like,” Collins says. “For my husband and me, it's important to connect with other families experiencing similar situations. We form a supportive network. We love meeting the volunteers and have become volunteers as well.”

CCK is one of only a handful of year-round dedicated medical camps in the U.S. Since opening in 2008, it has served more than 20,000 medically fragile campers from 43 states and eight foreign countries. It is accessible for kids with a variety of disabilities and challenges. The camp offers an on-site medical center with a helipad, an indoor aquatic complex, equestrian riding arena, bowling alley, gymnasium, climbing wall, boating and fishing, a theater and four camper lodges.

“Campers create memories of their first horseback ride, favorite camp song, catching the big fish, or taking center stage starring in a show of their own,” said Roger Murtie, CCK president and executive director. “These moments not only change the lives of the campers and their families, they change the lives of our volunteers and staff as well.”

For many families, the financial burden of medical issues weighs heavily. Not here. The kids and their families spend either a week or weekend, free of charge. Their only worry: to have fun, find respite, feel normal and forget everyday struggles.

Murtie says support from companies like Toyota is crucial to the camp's survival. The automaker recently donated \$20,000 to the organization, which it feels is a great investment.

“Toyota is proud to partner with CCK to make these moments possible for families. We want to help people get where they need to go, both on the road and in life. This program provides a critical need for families already dealing with so much stress,” says Rick Hesterberg from Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, Inc. (TMMK). He is one of a group of Toyota team members who recently took a three-day road trip to visit partners on-site and see in person the organizations' impact. “Seeing the smiles and hearing the laughter from children and families who face immense challenges everyday – it's clear this is a very special place.”