



# Newsletter



vol 1 • Nov 2011

## Welcome from the American Cancer Society's new distinguished events chair!



As we enter into a new holiday season, we are often reminded of everything we have to be thankful for in our lives. For me, it is the opportunity the American Cancer Society gave me to be its Distinguished Events Director in Seattle. For you, it may be the time you get to spend with your family and friends. For the children in Washington and Alaska who have been diagnosed with cancer, it is Camp Goodtimes West.

Camp Goodtimes is a unique and special experience that children ages 7-17 can attend with a sibling for one week over the summer. It is a time for camp fires and sing-a-longs, for boat rides with French Fries, for whipped cream pie fights, and most importantly, for seven days without the worries of cancer or the stress of treatments. For them, it is a chance to be a kid again, and at no cost to their families who undoubtedly experience enough financial burdens associated with any illness.

And it is all possible because of you, the "Toast the Good Times Wine Auction" supporter.

Over the past eight years, the "Toast the Good Times Wine Auction for Camp Goodtimes" has raised over \$1.2 million for Camp Goodtimes West, making it the single largest funder of camp. It is an event that features fine wines from around the Pacific Northwest, superb dining, a live and silent auction, and games and entertainment throughout the night. This year, the event will be back at the Bellevue Harbor Club on Saturday, April 14, 2012.

I am excited to be a part of the event this year, and I hope you are too. I am looking forward to building off last year's success and momentum, and I am eager to work with such a talented and dedicated group of volunteers. If you are interested in serving on this committee, sponsoring the event, or donating auction items, please let me know! We could always use the extra support. (After all, 88% of every dollar raised goes directly to camp! The more money we can generate, the more children we can help.)

On behalf of the children at Camp Goodtimes, thank you for your continued support! You are the reason this is all possible, and so I look forward to sharing a toast to good times with you on April 14th.

Thanks again and happy holidays!

**Lisa Meindl**  
**Distinguished Events Director**  
**American Cancer Society**

*The Harbor Club*

We are excited to announce that we will be bringing the event back to the Eastside this year to its roots at the beautiful Harbor Club in Bellevue, WA.

For more information, please visit <http://goodtimeswineauction.org/> or contact Lisa Meindl at 206-674-4162 or [lisa.meindl@cancer.org](mailto:lisa.meindl@cancer.org)

## Introduction and Welcome - Camp Goodtimes New Director!



**Gus "Beef" Peterson**

I grew up going to summer camp at Camp Indianola, on the Kitsap Peninsula. I would say that it was there that I had my favorite childhood memories, and also there that I feel like I "grew up" the most. When I was too old to be a camper, I began to volunteer as a camp counselor through college and into my early professional life. It seemed like a no-brainer to simply give back to the place and the people that had given me so much.

In my mid-twenties I was a few years into a successful event management career – working as an event coordinator and event manager at the Kingdome (rest in peace, old friend), Safeco Field, and Experience Music Project. These jobs were tremendous for me in gaining experience with large events and motivating/supervising large groups of staff. Though enjoyable, the work didn't quite "fit". So

I went back to camp, volunteering at a youth center and summer camp in Dublin, Ireland for one year. When I came back to Seattle, my focus was clear and I started down the path that would lead me toward Camp Goodtimes.

I met "Daffy" (Gretchen). We hit it off remarkably well, she told me about her experience with childhood cancer and the role that camp played in it – "it gave me my childhood back". She invited me to come and check it out. I did, and I was hooked – both on Camp Goodtimes and on Daffy (married since 2005). I've been a part of the Goodtimes crew ever since. In my opinion, the best-kept secret about camp – once we're out on Vashon – is that it has nothing to do with cancer. Rather, it has everything to do with letting kids be kids in a setting where their story is normal. In the meantime, camp's amazing medical crew sees to the treatment, and a truly remarkable group of volunteers tirelessly gives their time, treasure and talent to make sure that all of the joy of childhood is packed into six amazing days.

When the opportunity arose to apply for this position, I was thrilled. I am honored to work alongside such amazing families and volunteers. I am thrilled to call this my "job" – to be able to continue giving camp to such a remarkable group of young people.

I look forward to the day when pediatric oncology camps are no longer needed, but in the meantime am so happy to be doing this work. As retired CGT Director Boss Hogg once said, "*Until there's a cure, there's camp!*" I am grateful for your enthusiasm and support, without which, none of this is possible.

Best,

Gus "Beef" Peterson





## TYLER

I first met Tyler years ago when he started attending Camp Goodtimes. It seems like I've known him forever. He's been such a fixture at camp and entertained kids and staff alike with his unique sense of humor and inquisitive nature. This year he did not attend because his camper days are behind him now that he has turned 18. Despite setbacks that are mind boggling and recoveries that are almost as astounding, Tyler graduated with his high school class ON TIME.

Quite simply, Tyler is one of the strongest people that I know, AND patient. He's actually been a very patient patient. He's endured 40 surgeries now. Whenever he has his head shaved for surgery and before it grows back in again his noggin looks like a topographic map of Nevada. To treat his condition and relieve his severe headaches he has had numerous shunts installed, then repaired, removed or replaced. I had a wonderful visit with Tyler recently at Seattle Children's and he was alert and smiling and recovering nicely from surgery #38. He had a laser level pointed at the side of his head so that his excess fluid could drain from his head. Precise placement of the drain was vital because as he told me, "If I'm not perfectly level, excess fluid can drain out and I could die." That statement shocked me. What do you say to that besides, "Well then for Pete's sake, STAY LEVEL!"

Here's an 18 year old kid who has to be stuck in the hospital and he knows that if he doesn't remain level in his hospital bed or his chair, that he could die. Nurses clamp the drain whenever he has to move, even if he is just repositioning himself in his chair. After he gets settled, they turn on the laser level and get him situated just right and then reopen the valve. This goes on 24-7.

His attitude is so matter of fact. I don't hear him complain. I just hear him talk bluntly about his treatment and then excitedly about other things, like attending the Starlight Prom in the spring, or about fun memories from camp. He told me that when he gets older he wants to get a tattoo on both arms that will say, "Cancer Sucks!". Yes it does, big time.

I'm just so sorry that Tyler has to go through all of this. He's gentle and kind hearted and he's always interested in what other people are doing. He is just such a genuine young man and I'm hoping and praying that his condition is stabilized soon so he can get on to enjoying his life. I wish for him that his worries can be the regular ones that an average 18 year old worries about and NOT about the crappy ones that confront him every single day at the moment.

He's strong, NINJA strong, and he has grown up and learned how to fight. His instructor has been Cancer itself. Soon I am confident that this student will defeat his teacher.



By Paul "Mooselips" Dudley

## 2011 Camp Goodtimes Report

The theme of this year's camp was "Every Day's a Holiday". Special activities at camp included a Halloween costume contest, a "Thanksgiving" sibling retreat, a special performance in celebration of Mardi Gras by Vashon Island's own UMO Performing Group, an all-camp "Survivor"-style Olympics, A New Year's Eve ball-drop in the middle of our dance, and much, much more.

Highlights this year included the six hour cruise on Puget Sound sponsored by Argosy Cruises; the afternoon carnival sponsored by the Bellevue Rotary in June and the Tacoma Rotary in July (complete with a whipped cream fight) and wacky hair styling by Gene Juarez Salons.

Perhaps the most poignant moment of camp was the Thanks-sibling tree, it's decoration at lunch and reveal at dinner. To celebrate "Thanksgiving" at camp, siblings were given their own retreat away from camp at the Point Defiance Zoo. While the siblings were away, the remaining campers (all survivors) were presented a Camp Goodtimes-style Thanksgiving opportunity to display their thanks to the siblings who went through (or are going through) treatment alongside them. They were presented with colorful paper leaves to write words of encouragement and thanks to siblings or anyone who was at their side during the toughest moments. The tree (a tall, bare butcher paper tree) came to life as the leafy notes of thanks colored the tree's limbs. The tree was then covered for a grand

unveiling at "Thanksgiving" dinner, once the siblings had returned. At dinner, after all the turkey was eaten, songs sung, and "choogies" choogied, the survivors (staff included) were invited to stand around the perimeter of the dining room. The siblings and survivors alike were invited to look around the room, at each other, and to take a moment and soak in the shared story in the room. The tree was revealed as a visual expression of life and thanks, and there was not a dry eye in the house. It was a beautiful moment in which everyone's cancer story was tastefully approached, affirmed and articulated through the metaphor of a tree coming to life.



## 2011 Camp Statistics

### June Resident Camp:

- 111 Campers
- 14 on treatment, 48 off treatment
- 49 siblings
- Staff: 69 volunteers + 1 paid ACS staff

### July Resident Camp:

- 118 Campers
- 9 on treatment, 63 off treatment
- 46 siblings
- Staff: 71 volunteers + 1 paid ACS staff

August Kayak Camp: 13 Campers, 2 staff volunteers, 1 paid ACS staff

Together with our millions of supporters, the American Cancer Society saves lives and creates more birthdays by helping you stay well, helping you get well, by finding cures and by fighting back. Countless Americans who have never had cancer and more than 11 million who have will celebrate a birthday this year thanks to the American Cancer Society's focus on saving lives.

Because of the generous supporters below, over 200 campers were able to attend Camp Goodtimes and live happier lives:

**Argosy Cruises**  
**Baker Foundation**  
**Bellevue Rotary Foundation**  
**Glaser Foundation**  
**KOA Care Camps**

**Lakewood Elks**  
**Larry Goldberg via Jewish**  
**Foundation**  
**Schultz Family Foundation**

**Seattle Police Employees'**  
**Fund**  
**Tacoma Firefighters**  
**The Rachelle Lynn Conrad**  
**Fund**