



The Camp Kerry Society is a non-profit organization providing retreats, support groups, counselling and education for families coping with grief and loss.

Camp Kerry Society
Newsletter, Volume 1,
December 15, 2012.

“Camp Kerry was an amazing journey. I met wonderful families and we have formed a bond that we will never let go ...”

Ella, Age 9



A Message From Heather (Executive Director):

Hello to all of you. I am excited to share with you the very first edition of our Camp Kerry Society Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to reach out to our supporters, our volunteers and our participants. We want to let you know what we've been up to and where we are headed; to share some of this year's successes, inspirational words and photographs.

When I returned home -- both exhausted and exhilarated -- from our September family retreat, I received a lovely email of thanks from a mother who said that her 9-year old son, on their return home, announced to her "At Camp Kerry they treat you like family." This simple but powerful statement from a child illuminates the heart of what our society is all about.

Our human capacity to respond to threatening situations (such as the diagnosis of a terminal illness or the death of a loved one) depends on our experience of being embedded within a nurturing, compassionate community. This kind of community continuously reaffirms our capacity for relationship and healing which can bring us to a place of hope; even in the midst of dark times or challenging life circumstances. We see the manifestation of this hope in the faces of our participants -- as they leave groups and retreats with a new sense of community and connections (new and old) forged, re-forged, affirmed, validated and strengthened.

Thank-you all for being part of the healing and vibrant community of the Camp Kerry Society. I am simply in awe of all that you offer to one another in the spirit of giving from the heart. It is truly a privilege to spend my time with such amazing, talented and courageous people.



OUR YEAR AT-A-GLANCE:

This has been an exciting year of development for our Society. In the fall of 2011, we were successful in achieving our official Canadian Charitable Status. We are now receiving referrals from all over the province of British Columbia. Participants at this year's September retreat came from almost every community in the Lower Mainland, the BC Interior and Vancouver Island. In the past year our office has responded to more than 1500 calls and inquiries from around BC and across Canada. Also in the past year, our Executive Director provided workshops and presentations on loss and grief for over 150 health care professionals, school counsellors and educators in Europe, Quebec, Ontario and BC. People are interested in knowing more about what we do and how our model works. While there are a number of children's grief camps across the country, there are none quite like Camp Kerry, where the whole family goes on retreat together and where emphasis is placed on healing both within and between families.



CIRCLES OF STRENGTH SUPPORT GROUPS: These year-round community-based groups provide opportunities for kids, youth and parents to connect, to share their experiences in a supportive environment and to gain new tools to cope with their grief. All groups are facilitated by Camp Kerry counsellors with the help of trained volunteers. We currently run these groups in North Vancouver. Due to increasing demand, we will be opening another Circles of Strength group in Burnaby in January, 2013.

CIRCLES OF STRENGTH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK: A NEW WAY TO STAY CONNECTED: This innovative pilot project was launched on September 16th to provide another avenue for Camp Kerry Alumni to stay connected despite the barriers of busy schedules and geographical distances. On the network, people can share photos, videos, post in blogs, set up personal profile pages, form groups, follow Camp Kerry news bulletins and more.



OUR FAMILY RETREATS:

CAMP KERRY:

This September we held our biggest retreat ever with 110 people in attendance for four days at the beautiful Zajac Ranch in Mission. The sun truly shone down on us as we enjoyed record-breaking warm temperatures, a surprise helicopter visit from the Canadian Coast Guard, an energetic campfire with an impromptu 80-person conga line, a candlelight memory service with a heart-felt performance of a song written by "the middles" kids group with the help of one of our music therapists, amazing art therapy projects, sharing circles and all kinds of outdoor adventures including gold-panning, horseback-riding, climbing, fishing and much, much more ...



CAMP KERRY MAUI: OUR FIRST INTERNATIONAL RETREAT

This July a team of our counselors had the privilege of creating and facilitating a successful new retreat program on the tropical island of Maui. Three families embarked on an intensive 8-day retreat experience that was a journey of self-discovery, spiritual connection, adventure challenges, relaxation and healing. Feedback was extremely positive and we are very grateful to the Pillon family of West Vancouver for their generous sponsorship of this special project. Dates for next year's Maui retreat are already booked and applications to nominate a bereaved family in financial need will be available on our website in the New Year.



FUNDRAISING NEWS:

In June our Camp Kerry Team, led by Nickole Macauley, raised \$23,000 in the Scotiabank Charity Challenge 5K/Half-Marathon fundraising event. A remarkable accomplishment for our small, but enthusiastic team of 30 runners and walkers! Planning is already in the works for next year's Charity Challenge Event. If you would like to run, walk, cheer on the team or be a sponsor, please get in touch with us.

DID YOU KNOW about the \$50, 000.00 Camp Kerry Challenge? Any donation you make to the Camp Kerry Society between July 1, 2012 and July 1, 2013 (up to \$50, 000) will be fully matched by the generosity of an anonymous donor. We are very grateful to our donor for motivating us all to give a little more. With your help we know we can meet this challenge!



WE SEND OUR IMMENSE GRATITUDE TO:

All of those individuals who have generously provided financial support to the Camp Kerry Society. *We simply could not do our work without you.*

The following businesses and organizations who provided us with donations, gifts-in-kind and invaluable support:

Unity Clothing (North Vancouver), Sign-A-Rama (North Vancouver), North Lonsdale United Church (North Vancouver), Upper Lonsdale Parent Participation Preschool (North Vancouver), ServoWeb Technologies (West Vancouver), JBL Charitable Foundation (Saskatchewan), Maui Life Retreats (West Vancouver), Stella & Dot (West Vancouver), Costco (Burnaby), Maui Restaurants: Paia Flatbread Company, Merrimans, Monkeypod, Mulligan's

& Willie K., O'o Farms (Maui), Grand Wailea Hotel and Spa (Maui), Blue Soul (Maui), Kihei Canoe Club (Maui), Advantage Data Systems (Burnaby), Lochdale Community School (Burnaby), Canadian Coast Guard, Royal Canadian Air Force (442 Squadron), Music Heals Foundation (Vancouver), Nimbus Recording Studios (Vancouver) & Hollywood 3 Cinemas (Surrey).

Our team of 50 dedicated volunteers who provided over 9000 hours of service this past year to the Camp Kerry Society! In the words of one of our participants: *"I am inspired by the many great people who participated and were involved with Camp Kerry. It reminded me of how there are so many people out there who CARE and makes ME want to give back in some way to the community like the volunteers have. You guys are amazingly beautiful people!"*



Reflections on Hope by Camp Kerry Team Member Shelley Hermer:

"I had never met Kerry Kirstiuk, but in many ways, do feel that I have. I understand that she was a gentle and giving person who focused on family, and was wise enough to believe in future and hope despite loss and grief. My second experience at Camp Kerry this fall cemented, in my mind, this spirit of giving. Absolutely, volunteers "give" their time to make Camp Kerry work, but I remain most struck at the gifts the families have to offer. Parents take care of each other, of other people's kids, they fill in when volunteers need more help. Children and parents alike share their wisdom, their candor, and their vulnerabilities. They open their shared lost futures and use them to make new ones. Gentle, giving, focused on family, and hope-springing. In this kind of environment, we are all better people. Hope can't be bought, traded or manufactured. It's shared, and given away to those who need it most, and they too will pass it along."



The Camp Kerry Society receives no government funding and is completely reliant on donations to run its' programs. All of our programs are provided free to bereaved families.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK:

Cheques can be mailed to:
#110-8061 Lougheed Hwy
Burnaby, BC V5A 1W9

Online donations can be made through our website:
www.campkerry.org

Tax receipts will be issued for your donation.

For more information, please contact us:

By phone: **(604) 608-9859**

By email: info@campkerry.org

“What keeps us alive,
what allows us to endure? I
think it is the hope of loving,
or being loved ... We weep when
light does not reach our hearts.
We wither like fields if someone
close does not rain their
kindness upon us.”

*Meister Eckhart, The Hope
of Loving*

Love Is In Our Family

(An excerpt from the 2012 “Middles” Kids Group Song)

In the hearts of those who love you, you'll always be there.
I'll never forget about you, I know you're always with me.
Love is in our family ...

I remember your smile, though you can't smile anymore,
I remember the things you did for us,
I looked up to you literally, you were a skyscraper,
I hope you're “heaven” a good time.

Sometimes when I dream, I dream that we're together,
When I cry I'm always tired,
Life's a journey of wonders, I love you and you love me,
I have a hole in my shoulder and gold in my eye.

