

One Camper Helped by Many

By Laura Krotky

“You can never anticipate how a child who has experienced loss will respond to camp, but year after year, they just keep surprising us with their resilience,” said Tiffany Marsh, Senior Camp Director at Beaver Summer Programs in Chestnut Hill, MA. Tiffany is one of a team of caring individuals who are helping Wildflower camper Josephina recover from a history of loss.



Just ten years old, Josephina has already experienced more loss than most of us will experience in a lifetime. She lost her dad when she was just an infant. A few years later, her brother passed away when he was just 18. Her mom speaks of the difficulties Josephina has had learning to manage her grief. She is shy and sometimes reluctant to participate in new things. To make matters even more challenging, after the loss of her brother she began to suffer from seizures.

Despite the troubled arc of her first 10 years, Josephina’s future is bright. She has Wildflower, committed to continuing our support throughout her childhood. She has her mom. Straight-forward and pragmatic, Shondell knows that, like many kids in their neighborhood, Josephina was at risk of being consumed by her grief. But Shondell is a fighter. Shondell spoke about the reality of her family life, “When summertime comes, you find the cheapest camp



and the one that gives you the most hours.” But, when Shondell saw how unhappy Josephina was at her local camp, she knew she needed to find a better alternative.

Shondell reached out to Wildflower. Upon meeting Shondell, Wildflower Family Liaison Deborah Shapiro thought, “I knew we could help this family. I knew that Wildflower could tap the many resources we have at our fingertips to make a real difference for Josephina.” Matching Josephina to a camp that she could return to every year for a nurturing summer experience could contribute to Josephina’s healing.

Deborah and Shondell began working together to find the camp that was the best fit for Josephina. Deborah suggested contacting Beaver Summer Programs. Beaver has an entire catalog of programs that

Josephina could choose from. Better yet, the staff at Beaver is experienced in providing a welcoming environment for children who may need special attention. When Shondell and Josephina first visited Beaver, Shondell said, "I was shocked by what was available and how beautiful the camp was."

Josephina began attending Beaver Summer Programs in 2012. Prior to the start of camp, Deborah helped Shondell connect with Tiffany, Beaver's Senior Camp Director, to help Tiffany better understand Josephina's needs.

Tiffany has seen firsthand how much Josephina has grown during her first two years at Beaver. "Josephina's first summer with us was a learning experience. We ask our campers to make so many choices at Beaver that it's sometimes overwhelming. Given Josephina's past, it would have been understandable if she didn't participate fully. However, when Josephina arrived at Beaver for her second year, she really turned a corner. She is really putting herself out there and benefitting fully from every experience she has. She's connecting with other campers and moving beyond her comfort zone to try new and different activities. I am just blown away by her resilience!"

Josephina's strength of character has enabled her to accept the help that has been offered to her. In doing so, she has begun to heal from her loss, surrounded by her mom, the good people at Beaver and her friends at Wildflower.

