

NEW VIRTUAL FAMILY CAMPS!!

Adjusting to the Times

All year long, our counselors and Board members look forward to standing in the driveway at Camp Twin Lakes as giant tour busses roll into our view. We would start clapping as children started climbing down the bus stairs, with some looking around to find their favorite counselor from the year before, others staring wide-eyed at this new experience. All would be coming from different cities and towns across Georgia, and from different circumstances, but all would experience the joy and other range of emotions that come from going to summer camp with siblings separated by foster care and other out-of-home placements. Each child at the camp would eat, play, and sometimes fight, with a sibling or siblings that they live apart from most every other day of the year.

This moment did not happen this year due to COVID-19. Yet as an organization we wouldn't let this sad reality darken the summer. Instead, we batted down the hatches and said, "What **can** we do?" And from this was born the 2020 Camp to Belong- Georgia Virtual Family

Camps. Throughout this summer, sets of siblings received care packages with supplies to experience a virtual camp together. The same counselors that would normally cheer as they got off the bus, interacted with campers across computer screens, demonstrating how to paint the CTB-GA logo as children painted the logo with their own siblings onto their canvasses. Counselors demonstrated how to make a simple friendship bracelet and then listened as siblings made bracelets for each other and compared their favorite music and discussed how their hair had changed since the last time they saw each other. Volunteers led favorite camp songs and dances for campers to try.

Did we miss our traditional camp? Yes, we all did. We missed the hugs and the laughter of the week. But being able to witness the stories and the laughter between brothers and sisters who have not seen each other during the current health crisis was priceless.

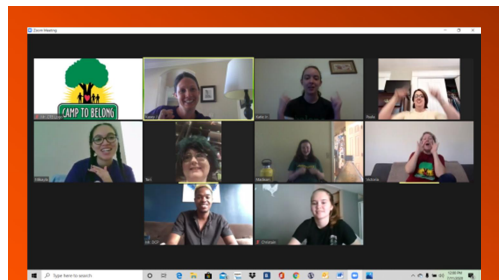
Many of our campers had not left their homes or group homes since the state

That was Then...



A set of siblings at the 2019 Summer Camp

This is Now



A 2020 Family Camp. Volunteers and separated siblings spend two hours together doing activities chosen by the siblings.

shut down months ago. These virtual camps gave them new faces to talk to, especially the faces of their siblings who know what they have been through and love them.

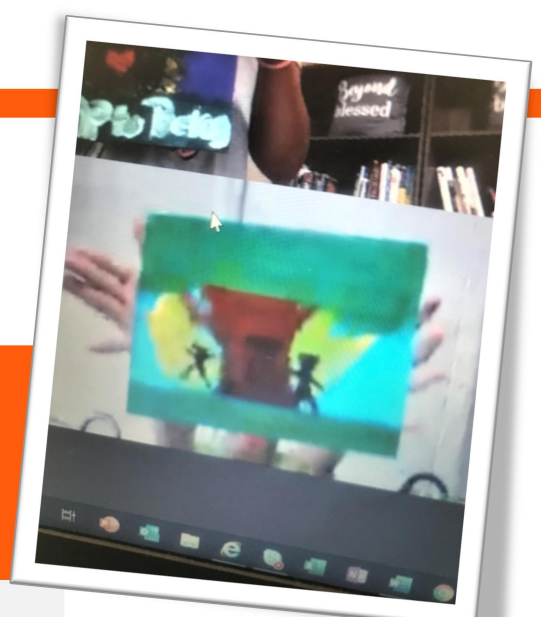
The future is still uncertain, and we plan to hold in-person Sibling Connection Events in the coming months for our campers. But should the health crisis continue to limit our ability to physically meet with kids, our virtual events are here to stay. Plans are already in place for individual Holiday Parties for sibling sets, complete with children picking out gifts for each other, decorating cookies, and celebrating holiday customs unique to their birth families, to celebrate like they did before they were separated. Trials can bring you down, but they can also make you think in new ways, and CTB-GA can now be involved in the lives of our campers throughout the year. Our campers can experience each other in new ways, celebrating holidays and celebrations together that they may not have had together for years and years.

We asked Sarah* and the five siblings she is separated from what we could change about our Family Camp to make it better. The only answer they had was, "Make it longer!!" Yes Sarah, we will be

here for all of you and continue to give you chances to be with your siblings no matter what. Because that is who Camp to Belong-Georgia is.

ARE VIRTUAL EVENTS STILL CAMP?

Teenagers Meghan and Lori* have attended CTB-GA for the past three years, with their two younger siblings joining them at camp in 2019. All four children attended our inaugural virtual Sibling Connection event in May of 2020. After Meghan and Lori attended their own Family Camp in June, Meghan said, "Camp is not just a place. Camp is when you get together and do activities, so this is camp."
*NAMES CHANGED FOR PRIVACY



Family Campers show their CTB-GA logo painting. Campers modified our logo to represent their own siblings with silhouetted figures or their names painted on the tree.

Camp by the Numbers

31

Number of siblings served at Family Camps, from seven sibling sets.

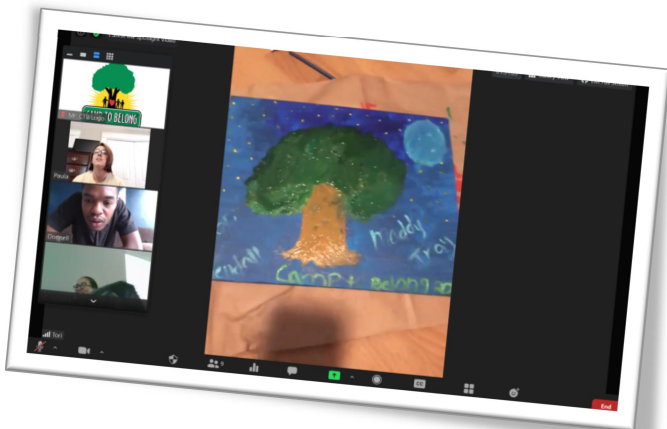
HOW ARE FAMILY CAMPS SPECIAL?

At one of our 2020 virtual Family Camps, Juan and Anthony* attended a CTB-GA event for the first time. As a 17 year-old, Juan did not have any opinion about what events he wanted to do beyond that fact that he wanted his younger brother Anthony to pick the events to make sure that he had fun. Our volunteers came up with a lava-lamp activity that both Juan and ten-year-old Anthony could do. The small group format of our virtual and in-person events allows us to adjust to create unique events for each sibling set.

*Names changed for privacy

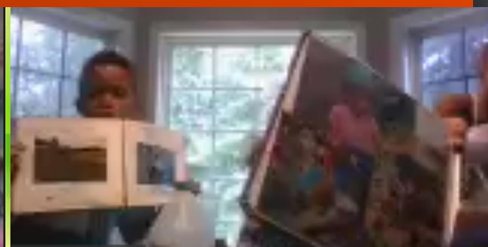
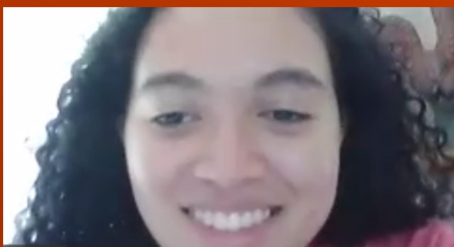
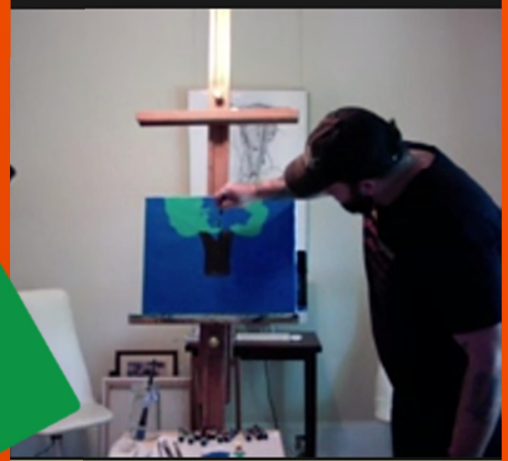
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Volunteers serving at our Family Camps from states as far away as New York, Tennessee, North Carolina and Florida.



Counselors participated in Family Camps by leading the activities chosen by Campers. Throughout the camp, siblings would show their progress, comparing colors chosen for paint and friendship bracelet string. Campers also received s'mores granola bars to remind them of their time at camp and to let them know that we will be there next year for the real thing!

Planning meetings are currently in progress to determine the goals and activities we have for our Sibling Connection Events for the coming year. In addition to our virtual Holiday Parties, smaller virtual events are being planned that may include Bingo nights, Art Expression Nights, and "Sleepover nights," to name just a few. For our in-person events, a "Spring Carnival"-- an outdoor afternoon in the park with a food truck, music, and socially-distanced games--is currently being planned (as health conditions allow us to hold in-person events).



Fall Fundraisers

Swing for Siblings

Engineering Systems, Inc. (ESI) hosted the 14th annual Swing for Siblings Golf Tournament FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23rd at Chateau Elan in Braselton, Georgia.

Players enjoyed an afternoon of fun, food and golf at one of Georgia's top courses, as well as learned from volunteers how CTB-GA has impacted children in foster care in strengthening their relationship with their siblings. Thank you for your generosity at this event!!!



Camp Twin Lakes' Spin for Kids 2020

On Sunday, October 4, volunteers joined in a bike ride at Camp Twin Lakes, and rode from home to support our summer camp program!!!! A good ride, food, drinks and fellowship was enjoyed by all!!!

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Where Challenges Become Triumphs

2020 Camp to Belong-Georgia Newsletter



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