



Camp To Belong—Georgia Newsletter

"I really liked everything that we did this week. I have never seen my siblings everyday for a whole week"

- 2016 Camp To Belong—Georgia camper

WE ARE FAMILY

"My favorite part of Camp To Belong is the quality time spent with my twin and friends and seeing so many new faces and helping them feel as much a part of the family as others have made me."



From June 12-17, Camp Twin Lakes in Warm Springs, Georgia was “home” to 78 brothers and sisters from 27 families, all with at least one thing in common — separation from one or more of their siblings in foster care or other out of home care.

OUR MISSION

Reuniting brothers and sisters placed in separate foster homes and other out of home care, creating a lifetime of shared memories through the summer camp experience and other sibling connection events.

Led and encouraged by 64 volunteers, the theme of the week focused on the different avenues of our life’s journey. Although different, in the end we are all bound together by the desire for happiness and success in life, however that may look in each of our lives. Camp To Belong was just a “pit stop”, but it gave these kids a week of fun, companionship with others in similar situations and bonding with their siblings to fuel them for later success!



"At Camp To Belong, I loved making new friends and getting to know new counselors and being called a family."

Brothers and sisters spent their days together participating in traditional camp activities like swimming, canoeing, archery, rock wall climbing and biking; as well as structured programming designed to nurture and strengthen the unique sibling connection.

Same sex siblings shared rooms together, a birthday party gave opportunity for brothers and sisters to learn each others ages, favorite colors and hobbies as they pick out presents for each other and write sentiments on a card.

This week was not “just” about summer camp, but letting kids “just” be themselves —creating lasting connections and memories with their siblings that will help shape their futures and make a positive impact on their lives for many years to come.



"My first week at Camp To Belong-Georgia has given me and my sister more time to bond then we've ever had in our life!"

- 2016 camper

CAMP TO BELONG—GEORGIA

JUNE 12-17, 2016

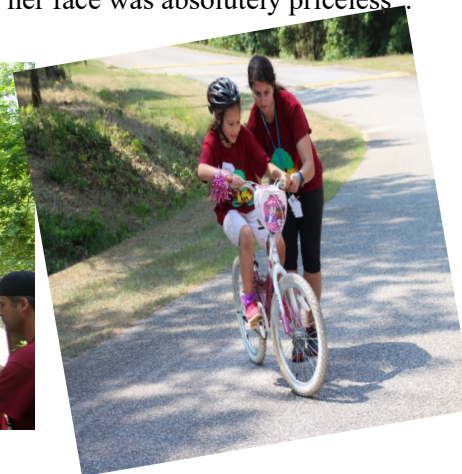
“Camp was amazing! It was my first year volunteering as a camp counselor and it will, without a doubt, not be my last!”



Arrival time is very special at Camp To Belong and sets the tone for entire week! Counselors eagerly greet nervous new campers and excited returning campers as they step off the bus. Campers are placed in family groups of 10-12 campers and within hours it seems, there is a bond formed between the counselors and siblings within the various family groups. Counselors recant numerous stories of special moments shared within their family groups.

The rock wall brought many such memories this year. A counselor shared a story of a brother scaling very easily up the rock wall, only to look back and see his sister struggling. He had himself lowered to her and helped to motivate his sister as she grabbed each climbing hold up the rock wall, finally making her way to the top. When she rang the bell, her brother was the loudest with his cheers and they held each other's hands in triumph!

A camper with some physical challenges that kept her from the biking activity was determined to ring the bell with her brother. They climbed together and all the other campers in their family group that they didn't know several days prior cheered them on. “The smile on her face was absolutely priceless”.



“My time at camp was a true blessing! What sealed the deal for me were the testimonies shared by the campers at the end of the week. One after the other they spoke of how camp had given them the connection and the time they longed for with their siblings. It was heartbreaking and inspiring all at once! What a honor to be a just a small part of something that is so big!”

- 2016 Camp Nurse

Until we meet again...a counselor observed a young camper crying because camp was over. An older camper stepped in with these encouraging words:

Older camper: "hey, what's the biggest number you've heard of?"

Younger camper: "1 million"

Older camper: "yeah that's a big number right? But guess what? There's only 360 more days until camp next year. So that doesn't make it seem as bad, right? Just 360 days, 51 weeks, until we all see each other".

"This is my second year at Camp To Belong and I've had lots of counselors tell me I'm doing better. Being in foster care is hard. I'll never see my mother again. I've been to 5 different elementary schools and 4 different middle and high schools. It is hard and at school they call me a freak and I cry myself to sleep most nights. But being here at camp is awesome. We are all the same and everyone has welcomed me."



"I understand what it's like to be away from your siblings. I haven't seen my brother in 6 years. We always used to argue but this camp helped to fix our relationship"



"I enjoy all the activities and making new friends but spending time with my brother is the best thing. We don't even have to be doing an activity, just being around my brother brings me so much happiness!"



6101 Golden Landing

Canton, GA 30114

678-521-7670

executivedirector@camptobelong-ga.org

www.camptobelong-ga.org

Summer Camp 2017
DATES TBA
Camp Twin Lakes, Warm Springs, GA

In addition to our Summer Camp Program, we connect separated siblings through year-round Sibling Connection Events. These events can be as small as one sibling group or larger depending on need and include a fun outing for the group supervised by CTB-GA counselors or board members. Please contact us to learn more about this opportunity!

Many Thanks to Our 2016 Sponsors

- ◇ Camp Twin Lakes
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