



# Camp To Belong—Georgia Newsletter

*Brother and a sister is loyalty. It is knowing that at the end of the day, they are there for you regardless of contact"*

*- 2015 Camp To Belong—Georgia camper*

Summer 2015

## Camp To Belong-Georgia... More than Just a Summer Camp



### 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.*

From June 14-19, Camp Twin Lakes in Warm Springs, Georgia was “home” to 76 brothers and sisters from 28 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. Led and encouraged by 36 volunteer counselors, each day began with a theme that included challenges to BE: BE *courageous*; BE *respectful*; BE *deter-*

*mined*, BE *inspired* and lastly *BElong!* 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.

### NOT JUST A CAMPFIRE -

*A camp counselor's story*



*“We’ve been in foster care since we were little and it is hard not to be together. It isn’t fair. I cant even kiss them goodnight. I’ll come back here every year to be with them”*

*- 2015 camper*

My family group included a family of 5 - 3 sisters and 2 brothers. The girls live together, but the boys are separated from them and each other. They had a great week together with many laughs and smiles. At the closing campfire, the eldest, a 17 year old boy, tearfully shared how he wishes he could play with them, read to them and just be with his siblings. Honest moments like that really

make clear how the smallest interactions between siblings can help solidify the family bond that has been torn away from them. This camp means creating more than “just” a few memories for some kids, it means instilling a sense of family and togetherness in siblings they would not otherwise have. Separated siblings share meals together, same sex siblings share a

room, cheer each other on during positive activities, laugh and play as a family, and grow as individuals. I really enjoyed getting involved with such a wonderful organization and cause!



## CAMP TO BELONG—GEORGIA JUNE 14-19, 2015



It is among the picturesque lake at Camp Twin Lakes in Warm Springs that the official “opening ceremony” of Camp To Belong—Georgia is held. The campers hear of many of the new and exciting events and activities planned for them during the week. What none can know at this point is the impact of these moments on the lives of these campers. The fights, the camara-

derie, the challenges faced this week are moments that will turn into memories, and each of the days together represent the building blocks of relationships. Six days later these same campers and counselors gather around the closing campfire and share their stories of what the week together has meant to them. There are smiles and laughter, and there are often tears of joy and

sadness. Stories of the squabbles between the swimming pool and the bunk beds, the words of encouragement at the climbing wall, the birthday candles blown out define those big brothers and bossy sisters, those baby brothers and sisters. This is the bond Camp To Belong—Georgia emphasizes, reinforces and creates the time and space for siblings to nurture.



*“When I first got to foster care I was so sad. I was a Momma’s girl and I was crying so much. I thought I was in a nightmare. Every time I got used to a foster home then I’d have to go to another home. It felt like I kept having to start over again. This time at Camp To Belong—Georgia allowed me to be a child. Camp let me act like a kid and not worry about what will happen the next day. It let me be closer to my sister”.*

*"It's hard not to see my sister and two brothers. I want to tell my siblings that I love all of you even if we do fight like cats over a piece of cheese."*



*"Being at this camp was an awesome experience. I've never seen this side of me before. I love it. I'm more positive and happy. I don't think I've had this much fun in so many years. I just want to say thank you to everyone for encouraging me to be a happier person."*



*"I'm separated from my twin and it is really hard to deal with. This camp gives me an opportunity to bond with my other half. I've built another family at Camp To Belong—Georgia!"*



*"I lost my Mom and I only get to see one of my sisters but not the other. I enjoy Camp To Belong—Georgia and it has inspired me to be myself. I really had fun seeing my sister!"*

Give Siblings Their Right to Reunite®



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Summer Camp 2016  
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 2015 Sponsors

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