



My Experience at Camp Trailblazers – 2 perspectives

By Nick Barnes + Kathy Barnes

Nick

When I first arrived at the mall in Toronto, I was a little nervous and a bit scared as I knew no one. Randy came over first and told me who he was and then I was happy I was there. Then Amanda came and talked to me up and off we went on the bus. On the way to Camp Trailblazers on the bus everybody was so nice, so cheery, and so happy and made me feel welcome. We sang and got to know each other. When we thought we arrived at the camp because we had missed the turn so we turned around and zoomed to the camp. That was so funny!!! When we finally arrived there the first thing I thought was that this camp is going to be amazing. I made some friends and started to explore all the things that we were able to do. I remember the first thing we did was find our cabins. I was with Randy, Andrew, Gage, Kirk and two other people but I don't recall their names but then I knew it was going to be fun.



The first day was amazing; bacon and eggs for breakfast then our group went on the rock wall it was scary at first but then I zoomed to the top. After, we did some group games which were really thought out and took us a while, but we finally did it. This is where I realized that my new friends go through some of the same surgeries I have and they have the same doctors as me!! I thought that was cool!! Then when the sun went down the whole camp gathered around the campfire. We started to sing songs and do skits and some of the girls volunteered to come up on stage and sing. The next and final day was the absolute best; we went canoeing, the thing I have always wanted to do. I got soaked but it was awesome. Then me and Kirk went back to play on the trampoline, they were really bouncy trampolines. Then came dinner it was so good and yummy. Then we had the final campfire which was the best. It was so fun, we all did songs, skits and I remember one person doing the worm it was cool.

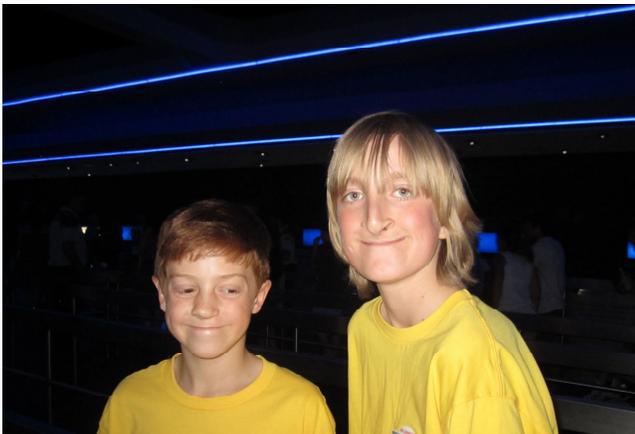
On the way home I got some friends numbers to stay in touch and when I got off the bus I was a little sad to see my friends leave but I knew I would see them next year for another amazing time! Camp Trailblazers was my first camp experience and was the best camp I ever had in my entire life!!



Kathy

From a Mom's perspective, I am glad that we have AboutFace a part of our lives. The camp experience Nick had with you was an amazing experience for him to have. It proved for one that he can be with other kids and have fun and not worry about what he looks like or if they couldn't understand him because of his speech problem. He gained some self confidence and was able to come out of his shell a bit. For the first time in his life he felt like he belonged, not like an outsider.

As he is getting older I see some of the challenges that he has endured like other kids judging him, and I know when he came home from camp he started to show self-confidence and talk more about his cleft lip and palate. All along he thought he was alone, but after camp he was thrilled to have shared the same experiences with the other kids. He felt like a part of a special group for the first time in his life.



When he went to Disney (with the Dreams Take Flight program) with his friend Gage from Camp Trailblazers, he was so excited!! The two of them never left each other's side. The friendship that they have is incredible and if it wasn't for Camp Trailblazers, they would have never have met. AboutFace and all of the staff have made a **positive** impact on my son's life and we are very grateful that the hospital gave us your brochure. With all of you beside him, and giving him experiences and challenges to overcome, Nick can now look in the mirror at himself andSMILE!!!