



Camp HOPE  
301 Florence Drive  
Stevens Point, WI 54482  
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*A camp experience for children  
and their families after the  
death of a loved one*

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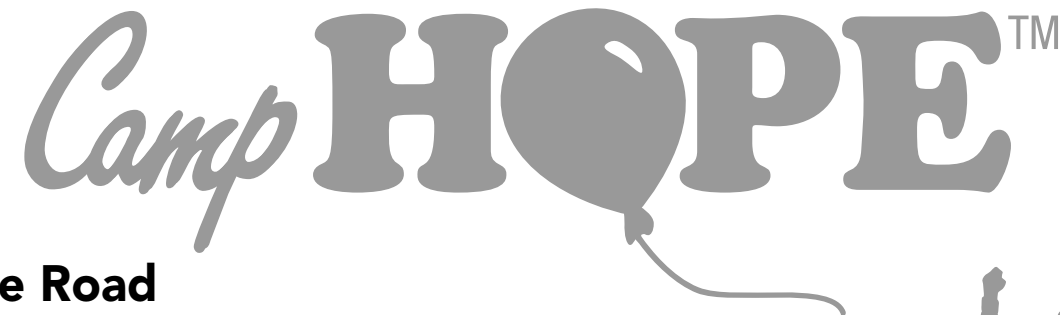
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## Another Turn in the Road

By Becky Loy

My father, along with his brothers, began a construction company years ago that is still successful today. He started it with little construction or business knowledge as a young man returning from WWII. He is modest enough to say that his start was due to some luck and a few people who believed in him, like a banker blessing him with a loan that was based on little to no collateral. At 92, my dad still goes to his office. I get it. It is different than leaving a job or even a career. Leaving something you created is much more personal.

Starting Camp HOPE helped to heal my heart after my daughter died. And I'm grateful every single day for that. Then seeing what these weekends have done and continue to do for other people trying so hard to find any little help to feel better, Camp changed from being my healing place to being a space for 1000's; larger and more life affirming than I could have ever imagined.

In the last year, I've decided to take a step a bit into the background of Camp HOPE. Like my dad, there probably is no leaving it ever completely for me. But I recognize that after being in the forefront for 27 years, it is time for someone new to enter the picture.

At the Camp HOPE weekend in September, I watched Mariah Singer, my new Camp Director, run her first staff training session. She explained how she was hired: "Maria (Loy) didn't want the director position and I told her that maybe I should do it, and I texted Becky this and Becky texted back 'yay!'" Okay, there was a bit more to it, but when I first met Mariah, there was a true sense of knowing that she would be a perfect fit.

Mariah Singer, of Amherst, experienced Camp HOPE first as a camper after her husband, Greg, died of cancer in 2013 and she attended with her young daughters. Here is part of her life story:

*"Every time I'm able to tell my story, it helps me to heal just a little bit more, and it's a nice introduction to how Camp HOPE really helps families. I met Greg in Minneapolis after college. He was brilliant and funny and wonderful just to be around. We understood each other, we respected each other and we adored each other.*

*"A few years and a lot of love later, Greg and I bought a house and moved to Sun Prairie and got married in our front yard. In 2008, we started a family. As Greg used to tell our girls, Hollie made us a family and Hazel made our family complete.*



*"We were a very happy little family, living a slow and quite stress-free life while our girls were young. I was a stay at home mom and Greg worked second shift so our mornings were never rushed. There was a lot of cuddling in bed, singing and dancing in the kitchen and sending Daddy to work with little girl kisses spilling out of his pockets. He used to whisper to the girls, "You are wonderful and I love you just for being you."*

*"Shortly after Hazel, our youngest, turned two, Greg developed a stomach ache at a kid's birthday party. The stomach ache never went away.*

*"After a couple of weeks of testing, it was revealed that he had stage 4 lung cancer. It took only 6 weeks of intense radiation and chemo before our oncologist told us that the treatments weren't helping. So just two months after that stomach ache, Greg was put in hospice. Most of that last month of his life was spent at home, enjoying the time we had left and living a normal family life as much as we could. He was in and out of a hospice facility to help manage his aggressive and rapidly changing pain.*

*"From the start, we had been open and honest with our children about Greg's illness and what was ultimately going to happen. We didn't really know any other way to be. But it's more than heartbreaking to tell a 2 and 4 year old that their daddy is going to die soon. And not only saying the words out loud to my babies, but having to explain the entire concept to them and describe what death actually means. It's a lot for a child to comprehend, let alone experience.*



# Welcome to Camp HOPE™

Hi,

I felt compelled to write to you tonight as my sons were at Camp HOPE this weekend and we had a two hour ride home. Throughout that ride my oldest son could not stop talking about the camp. He told me things he learned about himself and his dad (that depression is as serious as cancer and is as hard to beat and that he never realized that before) and that other children also have lost their dad. Ty talked about how he was amazed how many other people have gone through or are going through what he is. He just loved the camp and was very sad to leave. He has raved on and on about his counselors/group leaders and how wonderful they were. He was sad tonight and as I thought maybe it was due to thinking about his dad, it was not. He was sad because he missed his leaders. This told me how big of an impression they made in such a short amount of time. The biggest thing was that Ty is already talking about maybe one day going back and being a leader himself. He keeps saying he would like to do this. This all made me cry (in a good way). I want to thank you so much for offering this for my sons. It was an incredible experience for them and made a huge impact on them, especially my oldest. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for offering this experience and making it such a great time in my son's life during a period that has been so difficult for him. Please let Ty's group leaders know that he loved them. =)

Thank you!  
**Christy**

*"I want to start off by thanking you, Becky, for everything your camp has done for my son. We attended Camp a few weeks ago and what my son received there wasn't anything that anyone else could have helped with. He told me he didn't need to be mad anymore, and he wasn't. Whatever his experience there was, it changed him in such a good way."*

**Karen**

*"We made it home and my mind is exhausted and certainly not processed everything that happened this weekend, but it was beautiful and perfect and even though I hate the circumstances in which you all came into my life, I am so happy to have shared these last days with you. I hope our paths will cross again. Although we may have lost many wishes and dreams, there is beauty in knowing we have so many more. Thank you for helping me start to find my 'many more'."*

**Jana**

A camp experience for children and their families after the death of a loved one.

## WINTER 2016

*Please help us to continue  
providing free services  
to grieving children and  
their families.*

*Remember Camp HOPE  
with your giving.  
We are a non-profit,  
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**DID YOU KNOW?**  
**Since 1989, we  
have served over  
4000 grieving  
children and teens.**



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“A month into his hospice care, Greg’s body really started to fail. I told Hollie, our oldest that was 4, that Daddy was getting worse and I didn’t know when but it wouldn’t be long now until he would die. As I was tucking her into bed, she asked me, “Mama, is Daddy going to die tonight?” I told her, “I don’t know, baby, but yeah, he might.” She just nodded, rolled over and snuggled up to her teddy bear while I rubbed her back.

“He did die that night, at about 3 AM while holding my hand. I woke the girls up early that morning to say goodbye. We had a small ceremony surrounding Greg in our bed. We sang to him, played some of his favorite music as we said our goodbyes.



“As soon as his body was wheeled out our front door, I crawled into bed with the covers over my head. Hollie and Hazel spend the rest of the day playing with their cousins.

“It wasn’t until almost a year after Greg died that Hollie said something fairly surprising to me one night at dinner. We were talking about the night that Greg died. Hollie asked if I remembered what she had asked me...if Daddy was going to die that night. I couldn’t believe she remembered that conversation a year later! I told her, yes, that I remembered. And then she said, “Mama, I think my whole life I will wish I had never said that, because I will think that I made Daddy die.”

“I realized at that moment, a year later, that even though my kids are very resilient, like most, I hadn’t really given them the outlet for a safe place to explore their emotions, outside of our little family. I had been open with them about my own feelings, we talked a lot about Greg (and still do). So, my girls have really followed my lead but that just didn’t seem good enough. So this is where Camp HOPE came into our lives.

“When we arrived at camp, we felt immediately welcome by staff and the therapy dogs that greet everyone. The counselors whisked the girls away to meet their other counselors and campers in their group and let me tell you, it was, ‘BYE MOM!’ without looking back.

“The counselors do a fantastic job of making the kids feel welcome and at ease to be themselves. Simply providing the opportunity for these kids to spend time with other kids with similar experiences has a magic all its own.

“It might seem like a short amount of time, but the reality is that there is an intensity and a deep respect and support of one another that makes the weekend feel like this 30 hours together has been more like 30 days. Kids don’t usually want to leave but are both exhausted and energized after camp.

“While the camp is ultimately geared for children, parents aren’t left behind. I wasn’t expecting such a profound experience for myself. It’s a break from being parents, grieving themselves, and a break from the rest of the world. The adults experience a lot of sharing but also get to do the climbing wall, yoga, drumming

and massage. After experiencing this, I felt empowered at such a vulnerable time in my life and accomplishing something new revealed a sense of pride.



“My daughters are now 7 and 4 ½. They know that they have Greg’s eyes, Hollie has his feet and Hazel has his eyelashes, they both have his curiosity, sense of humor and intelligence. And now they also know that there are other children, like them, who have also lost someone special to them. Having to say goodbye to their dad and be without a dad is a pain I wish they never had to and continue to experience. But in order for them to heal and be allowed to live happy lives as I know that Greg would want them to, they need to know they aren’t alone. Camp HOPE has immensely helped my family. And I’m thankful to simply be a part of helping other families now as well.



As I’ve told Mariah, who has a background in Marketing and as you can see, a life experience in grief, she will no doubt see me rolling down the path into the WI Lions Camp in my wheelchair. Like my father, I will continue to go to work. But as you have gotten a sense of my new partner, and eventual successor, Camp HOPE is in good hands for a very long time to come.

## Camp HOPE Photo Gallery



Many of the gifts received were given in tribute and recognition of special individuals. All gift tributes are noted by the *italicized names* after the donor’s name.

### THANK YOU:

Talan Boos, Oshkosh, who asked for donations to Camp HOPE in lieu of birthday gifts  
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