



Counselor

Kayleigh Young - Lead RN

Kayleigh is one of our amazing lead nurses! She comes from our partner, Tendercare, and does everything with a smile on her face!

How did you get involved with camp? I have worked as a RN at Tendercare for 12 years which is a home care company based out of Indianapolis. I first heard of camp because some of the kiddos I worked with regularly had been campers for years. Tendercare started providing overnight nurses in the cabins so the counselors could get some sleep. After working those night shifts, I felt compelled to come back for the whole week!

What inspired you to keep come back after your first year? I remember leaving my first year at Camp in complete awe. I was so proud of the campers for conquering their fears, being brave enough to trust new people with their care, and just being a kid at summer camp. The relief these campers feel when there are other kids getting tube feedings at the table or when no one really bats an eye if someone needs suctioned - it's just another day at camp for us! Most campers never really get to encounter kids like themselves and I love to see those friendships blossom.

The counselors also amazed me with their "can do" attitudes and ingenuity at making all the summer camp things happen all while still providing the cares these kids need in the middle of the woods (or on a zipline, a canoe, or up a tower!). A week at camp really does my heart good, and I just love coming back each year to see how the kids have grown and meet our newest little campers!

As a nurse, how do you think camp helped you to be a better clinician?

As a nurse, I feel as though camp pushed me outside of my own comfort zone. I was so used to caring for the same kids on a regular basis and knew them so well. But at camp, I was seeing new ventilators, different feeding pumps, providing care I hadn't done before, and I learned so much. Having the confidence to jump in and just try new things was the key. The counselors I learned from at camp were so willing to show me and walk me through new things that I felt confident in caring for these kids.

I also feel as a clinician, I learned to get creative and treat the kids as kids first. Yes, they have a lot of needs, but they deserve to have fun, experience new things, and just be kids. So I sought out new experiences for my patients and would approach those experiences with the same "can do" attitude I saw at camp. I would encourage my patients to try new things, be brave and know they can do anything they set their minds to!

What does attending camp do for you both personally and professionally?

Personally, attending camp is always such a refreshing experience for me. It makes me feel like a little kid again - having water balloon fights, dancing, pulling pranks, and just plain having fun. The campers just love to laugh - so the sillier and goofier you are, the better!

Professionally, CHAMP Camp offered me the chance to learn different techniques, gain experience with various trachs/ventilators/feeding pumps/diagnoses etc, and it was just a positive learning experience all around. Camp gave me the confidence to jump in to new situations and try something new!

Why should a nurse apply to be a counselor at CHAMP Camp?

Come and try out something new! Get outside of those hospital walls, push those comfort zones and really embrace your inner kid again. A nurse would be surprised to see how much these campers can do despite all the physical challenges they may face. I can't promise you won't leave tired, but I can promise you will want to do it all over again the next year! The smiles on the kids faces makes it all worth it.

So glad that night duty led to her returning!

