



Counselor

Maren Johnson - Occupational Therapist

Maren will return for her 15th year this year! She is one of the most giving people that we know. Because of her genuine flexibility, she might have served in the most cabins and in the most roles during her time with us! We love that she is always focused on putting the campers first and making sure that their experience is extraordinary!

How did you get involved in CHAMP Camp? I got involved in CHAMP Camp during my time as a graduate student attending University of Indianapolis School of Occupational Therapy. A big Thank You to Jenny Fogo who was one of my OT professors and the executive director of CHAMP Camp at the time. She was recruiting volunteers for camp in the summer of 2008 and I knew it would be a wonderful opportunity as a college student that I couldn't pass up. I went that summer and the rest was history! I can't imagine my life without CHAMP Camp in it! It's one of the best things that's ever happened to me!

After your first year, why did you come back for the next 14 year? CHAMP CAMP = family! and I quickly realized I always wanted this to be part of my life forever. There are so many magical moments happening all week long at camp which leave a long lasting impression in your heart and soul, IYKYK. You go knowing you can impact children's lives in many ways and then leave each summer knowing the profound impact they made on yours. Seeing campers meet and interact with one another sets the tone, as some have never been around others with similar medical conditions/respiratory needs like themselves (such as others with trachs or on ventilators) and they really thrive with one another throughout the week. CHAMP Camp helps foster each camper's adventurous side and truly supports them trying anything they want to do that's available to them at camp, such as those with their various medical needs (including ones on ventilators) going zip lining, swimming, boating, up an alpine tower and more! CHAMP = children have a lot of motivation and potential! Camp really lives up to that and fully supports any camper's growth and independence throughout the week, it's truly amazing to see year after year!

What is your favorite memory from CHAMP Camp? So many wonderful memories over the years, it's hard to choose! But here are some favorites:

- Seeing Kaden arrive for his first year of camp, not knowing he was coming, then realizing he was 1 of my first OT patients when I became a practitioner at an outpatient clinic in the northwest region of IN.
- Wheelchair art with Corey, knowing that the art would be auctioned off at the annual Fundraiser Silver Sneaker Ball, we had a blast making it!
- Extra time fishing with Dejon aka Mustard, may he rest in peace. We all love and miss him oh so much!
- Having Annie do my make-up to help us get ready for the dance.
- The Oreos, oh the endless stashes of oreos!! (we love our snacks at camp!),
- The endless amount of times of seeing campers try each of the various activities for the first time. Each one of them is so brave and inspiring!
- Anthony Castonzo of the Indianapolis Colts (now retired) visiting camp a couple of time,
- Stream study at the Ohio camp location, it was so peaceful and loved watching the campers enjoy it/it was fun helping them catch crawdads
- My dance parties with Karliee!
- And one of my absolute favorite times of Camp, seeing all the campers arrive and giving them their special arrival chants and cheers, nothing, like seeing their faces light up and be so excited for camp!

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How does your week at camp impact the rest of your year? The week at camp can leave you speechless in the best kind of way and always helps put life into perspective! It is truly the best, most awe-inspiring and fun week ever!! I have developed so many wonderful friendships over the years with endless amounts of life-lasting memories! It's a lot of fun keeping in touch with the CHAMP CAMP fam, reminiscing on all the camp fun, and looking forward to the annual fundraiser, Silver Sneaker Ball! Being at camp is always very humbling and makes you appreciate all the things in life (whether big and small) even more so--for example, the ease of completing your morning and nightly routines in which many campers need a lot of assistance/have a lot of medications to take, etc. The campers are so resilient and spark so much joy within themselves/around others, which then sparks joy within me seeing how they appreciate anything and everything about camp! I carry those joyous feelings and memories with me all year long and will continue to do so forever and ever! The countdown to CHAMP CAMP begins, I always can't wait for the best week of the summer!!!

Why should someone in your profession consider being a counselor at CHAMP Camp? It is a way to continue the passion for helping others and fostering one's independence. Occupational Therapy (OT) = "skills for the job of living". And at camp, we are helping campers with the skills to discover things about themselves/others, grow and be more independent while having the time of their lives! As an OT at camp, your help may also be needed with positioning campers for each of the various activities (i.e., zipline, boating, tower, etc.) and as we do in our daily jobs, all working together as a team to assist kids in making gains/having successful/memorable experiences! We all work together, keeping each camper safe while they are also learning new things, making new friends, and having fun! GO CHAMP Camp!!



2008
to
2023

We love all of the awesome memories, Maren!

