



Background:

Camp Horizon was founded in 1982 and exists today through a partnership with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) whose staff liaisons help match children in foster care, aged 8-11, with our mentoring Summer Camp. We also partner with Camp Twin Lakes to host our Summer Camp and Leadership Development Program (LDP) weekend retreats.

Our Programs:

- **SUMMER CAMP:** Week-long overnight camp focused on 1:1 mentoring and affirmation to build self-esteem for children in foster care from ages 8-11. We hold a morning Self Esteem Class where we use role playing, games and discussions to tackle daily themes of "Self Awareness," "Feelings," "Anger Management," "Safety," and "Affirmation."
- **Leadership Development Program (LDP):** Our second level program for Summer Camp graduates ages 12-18, where we focus on peer-to-peer interaction, life skills and continuity of relationships during weekend retreats and events.
- **Camp Horizon Adult Mentoring Program (CHAMPs):** A program for our campers transitioning into adulthood from ages 19-23, where they are afforded guidance and help with real life events like applying to college and the military, buying a car or renting an apartment for the first time.
- **YEAR-ROUND OUTINGS:** We offer continuity for our kids by providing fun events and activities throughout the year so that they can be reassured by the continuing relationships with their Camp friends and "family." We offer something at least quarterly for all ages, while some events are age specific.

Our Volunteers:

Camp Horizon could not exist without our dedicated and passionate volunteers. Even our paid staff work for wages far below what they deserve knowing that they are contributing to a worthy and life-changing cause. For Summer Camp, all staff and mentoring counselors volunteer for a full week of overnight camp. Counselors are required to apply each year, and all counselors and staff submit to an annual background check. Due to the psycho-social needs of our campers, we have "counselor liaisons" available who are designated as our first line of help for behavior issues that may arise. Volunteer staff have a range of experience with many from backgrounds in education, counseling, therapy and one who is a current "shelter mom" in her full time job.

For our year-round activities, our volunteers provide transportation to our campers from the four DFCS agencies that we partner with. Active volunteers and corporate volunteer teams also often help us staff our large Holiday party and Family Reunion event as well as our two annual fundraiser events. Many of our behind-the-scenes jobs are also done by trusted and dedicated volunteers. From website maintenance and design, managing our Google Ad Words account, to graphic design and teaching yoga at Summer Camp, we are the sum of our volunteers.

Summer Camp:

Camp Horizon changes lives, and it all starts with Summer Camp, our largest program. Currently, we cap our Summer Camp enrollment at 32 children equally split among boys and girls to maintain a more personal "family" type atmosphere. We match each child with one volunteer mentor for the week to foster healthy relationships. Within this framework, trust builds, and our campers come out of their shells, responding positively to the very purposeful attention, direction, guidance and affirmation that Camp Horizon provides.

We offer the quintessential summer camp experience, where our campers find a safe place to just be "regular kids." Most of our campers deal with self esteem issues related to abuse and neglect. A large percent of our population also contends with falling behind in school and with learning disabilities and/or behavior challenges related to mood and anger.



Sadly, by only eight or nine years old, many of our campers have already been deemed "broken" or "bad," but when we focus positive and personal attention, gentle reassurance and love on them, they blossom, and there is usually a paradigm shift in how they view the world. As they are encouraged to set goals and achieve personal successes, their confidence builds, and they begin to see new possibilities for themselves in their own lives. Many of these positive changes are visible within only a couple of days at their first Summer Camp. We see other long-term changes as our campers grow and mature. We typically never experience these "bad" kids we've heard about. Our hope is that we are helping to break the cycle of abuse and that we are instilling a sense of worth in children who are often forgotten. We show them that they are important, and in time, they believe it.

Remaining engaged with children who've suffered trauma is critical for their continued progress and healing. Our campers are transient, many moving often in short timeframes. We work diligently to stay in contact, and our year-round events and ongoing programs help to ensure continuity and consistency for youth who may lack this elsewhere in their lives.

Camp Horizon is a safe place -- physically, emotionally and socially. One camper described it by saying, *"When the bus pulls into the gates at camp, all of our issues and drama from the outside world just melt away. We can just be ourselves."*

One of our CHAMPs participants said: *"I don't know a lot about how an actual family is supposed to work, but what I do know is this: the love and encouragement I get from Camp Horizon is enough for me."*

Summer Camp Expansion Project 2014:

We aim to double our Summer Camp Program, from a 32 to 64 camper maximum, which will likely require collaboration with additional metropolitan Atlanta County DFCS agencies to secure new campers in the 8-11 age range. The increased workload for our Summer Camp Director will necessitate upgrading it to a full-time position.

Our immediate goal for expansion is to reach more children who are at increased risk for negative behaviors like smoking, drinking, substance abuse and promiscuity, leading to potentially dropping out of school, criminal behavior, teen pregnancy, STIs, mental and physical illness, suicide and death. Our secondary goal is to be able to transition an increased number of summer campers into our LDP and CHAMPs programs.

In order to arrive at our budget of \$111,294, we doubled our current summer camp expenses excluding salaries and in-kind donations, which is \$34,022 x 2 = \$68,044. We would increase the current Summer Camp Director salary to a competitive and regionally appropriate \$35,000 and add in the 15% indirect cost allocation for the proposed new Executive Director salary (\$8,250). **\$68,044 + \$35,000 + (\$55,000*.15) = \$111,294.**

Community Context:

Data available from the nonprofit Foster Court Improvement Project show statistics through March 2013, compiled for Metro Atlanta at right.

We know that we are only hitting the tip of the iceberg in many respects with so many children in care in the metro area. However, our focus has always been on meeting the very basic psycho-social needs of children who have suffered trauma, not in reaching all of them with lesser focus. Working on self esteem, trust, resilience, and motivation require a long-term, consistent time investment with personal and meaningful interaction. Our overarching goal is to stop the "cycle of abuse."

County	In Foster Care	Total Children
Cobb	275	194,324
Dekalb	509	190,152
Fulton	618	271,186
Gwinnett	339	246,272

www.fostercourtimprovementproject.org/ga



While some youth in foster care have fewer obvious external issues, all of them at a minimum deal with diminished self worth and confidence. Some of our campers struggle with behavioral challenges, outbursts, anger, and aggression. A smaller number might deal with food issues related to having gone without food or not having food security, which may translate into food hoarding or gorging. We have specialists able to meet each of these kids where they are in order to help them make significant progress in only a few days' time. It works.

Research shows that there are several risk factors associated with dropping out of high school, something we work hard to counter. Youth in foster care are at an even greater risk for dropping out due to the lack of family support at home and lack of consistency. Disabilities and low income are disproportionately represented in the foster care population, further compounding the likelihood of dropping out.

We began informally tracking our teen campers shortly after initiating our Leadership Development Program (LDP). Currently, we can proudly state that we are beating the average for kids in foster care.

According to the Department of Education, from FY2011, there were 7,844 children in foster care in Georgia, moving an average of seven to 10 times. Fifteen percent graduated with a high school diploma, 2% earned a bachelor's degree and 75% of them function below grade level.

**Camp Horizon LDP
2001-2013**

HS Grad	34	74%
GED	3	7%
Some College	22	48%
Active Military	4	9%
Unknown	9	20%

n=46

Camp Horizon is small, but we are small on purpose. We plan to grow in a way that maintains our model of personal focus and continue our tradition of positively impacting the lives of Atlanta's most vulnerable youth.