Kayleigh Watkins is an outgoing six-year-old at Achievement Centers for Children Camp Cheerful in Strongsville. Each morning, she grabs her backpack ready for the day. Her counselor, Miss Jenna, welcomes her at Camp Cheerful, and she seeks out her two best friends before embarking on the day’s activities. When asked about her favorite camp activity, Kayleigh nods her head enthusiastically at each new suggestion: What about arts and crafts, swimming, canoeing, horseback riding? With so much going on it’s hard for her to choose just one.

However, it’s been a long journey for Kayleigh and her mom, Geniece. Kayleigh was diagnosed with profound hearing loss almost a year after her birth. “I went to get a second opinion and when they did the test, [the doctor] came right out and said, “It’s profound hearing loss,” says Geniece. “It was devastating.” As a result of the diagnosis, Kayleigh received cochlear implants in both ears.

Although signing is Kayleigh’s first language, after receiving the implants, her counselors helped her verbal speech take off. According to Geniece, “Camp Cheerful allowed her to express herself without being judged. She’s running around, she can talk with her hands, she can talk with other people. She’s more outgoing with any and everyone, from the counselors to the other children. She’s referring to her peers as her friends. Socially, I think she grew as a person.”

Kayleigh didn’t want that first summer to end and continued to talk excitedly about camp into the fall and winter seasons. “New Year’s Eve, she woke up the next morning and she said ‘Mommy, in June I go to camp.’ Then, a few days later, she had her backpack and she put in her swim shoes, sunblock, swimming suit and got her towel all folded up, so her bag was packed for camp.” In June, Kayleigh’s advanced planning paid off, and she returned to Camp Cheerful for her second summer where she continues to grow and learn this year.

“I’m overjoyed to see Kayleigh so excited about Camp Cheerful.”
—Geniece, Kayleigh’s mother

Like so many parents who send their children to Camp, Geniece is happy to have finally found a place where she can feel confident that Kayleigh’s needs are being met. “I’m overjoyed to see Kayleigh so excited about Camp Cheerful.”

Learn more about Kayleigh’s experience by visiting: https://youtu.be/m3lDK2HANc
Day of Caring at Camp Cheerful

Each year Camp Cheerful welcomes over 500 volunteers in our Therapeutic Riding and Adapted Sports programs and through volunteer events in partnership with organizations and corporations in the community. Volunteers from GE’s Day of Caring on May 17, 2017 worked to get Camp Cheerful ready for this summer’s campers.

Counselors Return to Make a Difference

It isn’t just our campers that return year after year. In 2017, we had an amazing 40 returning counselors to Camp Cheerful. These dedicated counselors from Northeast Ohio and abroad spend their summer helping campers of all ages with disabilities enjoy arts and crafts, sports, campfires, horseback riding and countless other experiences.

70 Years of Fun

Camp Cheerful began in 1947 through a three-way partnership between the Cleveland Rotary, the Achievement Centers for Children (then known as the Society for Crippled Children), and the Cleveland Metroparks. It was the first residential camp in Ohio designed especially for individuals with disabilities.

Over the years, Camp Cheerful grew and changed. The Great Hall was built in 1954, cabins for overnight camp were added in 1963 and a pool and bathhouse were built in 1985. The newest addition was the Camp Cheerful Clubhouse built to accommodate the River Rock Adult Day Program, focusing on enhancing the quality of life for adults through engaging social, recreational, and educational activities year-round.

As the disability landscape in the nation changed, Camp Cheerful began to accommodate more than just physical disabilities. Last year, 639 children and adults enjoyed recreation programs ranging from day camp and adapted sports programs to our year-round Therapeutic Horsemanship program and River Rock Adult Day program.

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OUR MISSION is to empower children and adults with disabilities and their families to achieve their greatest potential.

HELPING CHILDREN BE “ALL THEY CAN BE”

Founded in 1940 as Society for Crippled Children
A non-profit organization providing support, services and programs for children with disabilities and special needs and their families.

Programs include education and autism school; physical, occupational and speech therapy; Intensive Therapy Clinic; family support services; recreation, camp and sports programs.

LOCATIONS
Highland Hills
Westlake
Camp Cheerful in Strongsville
Child care centers, schools, homes
216-292-9700

Special Events

Help support our mission . . . join us! For details, visit www.achievementcenters.org

Saturday, September 23 5:30 PM
Camp Cheerful
1500 Cheerful Lane
Strongsville, OH 44136

To benefit
Achievement Centers for Children
Camp Cheerful

Patron Ticket—$50
Cheerful Contributor—$70

- Happy Hour in the barn
- Special raffles and silent auction
- DJ and dancing
- Special Camp 70th birthday activities
- A variety of delicious food
- Outdoor bonfire (weather permitting)

Sponsorship opportunities available. Contact Katie Spring at 216-292-9700 ext 226

achievementcenters.org/cheers