

Ha-Wong

OFFICIAL
NEWSLETTER OF
THE ERIN
EICKMEIER
FOUNDATION

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Happy Holidays! Such a crazy, yet wonderful time of the year! Even though Camp Circle Star is not in session, the EEF Elves are very busy planning next year's camp, as well as more programming for our very special campers.

I feel like we have been discussing "expanding our programming" quite a bit the last couple of years. Adding more to what we already do is a slow process. Arranging transportation and recruiting volunteers are the two biggest pieces, and we are thrilled to now have our bus, which enables us to get campers down to the Ranch virtually any time. Our volunteer connections are growing, and it's getting a bit easier to cover our campers. We have more than doubled our Fun Day

offerings and are planning to add a week to our summer camp schedule, and with that, we are thrilled.

But we want more! We want to host entire weekends away for our campers, winter day camps, sibling days, and a spring break camp. All that comes at a price, however, and we need your help. We want to hire a small group of regular camp staff to supplement our volunteers, so we can redirect our energies from volunteer recruitment to camp planning. We want to build an adult day programming site at the Circle Star Ranch to serve adults with disabilities who need stimulation during the daytime hours. And we want to provide camp programming for the 50+ children on our waiting list, whose parents recognize the uniqueness and beauty of

Camp Circle Star, and know it's a perfect fit for their special child.

If you are in the position to make a year-end donation to the Erin Eickmeier Foundation, we would be so grateful. We realize there are many deserving charities that also need support, but at the EEF, a little goes a long way. We are small, grassroots, and local. Any donation makes a significant impact at the EEF, and on the lives of the children with disabilities we serve. We truly appreciate your consideration and hope to hear from you soon.

Wishing you much Joy this season,

Renee

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The mission of the Erin Eickmeier Foundation is to enrich the lives of children and adults with disabilities with recreational and residential opportunities which respect and embrace their individual preferences and needs.

The Erin Eickmeier Foundation

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On the Cover

Pictured here is one of our sweet campers, Faith. Faith has attended Camp Circle Star for the past three years. She's sitting with one of Santa's helpers, Mr. Randy Lorch. Randy donated his time to Camp Circle Star when he visited during our Holiday Week. The campers were SO excited to see him in the middle of July! He even brought them little presents. Thank you Randy, and all of Santa's helpers, for making the holiday bright for all the children in our communities.

Heartfelt Thanks from a Camp Circle Star Parent

Anne Koetting is a wife, mother, nurse, and now-an author and public speaker. Anne did a beautiful job as our parent speaker at the EEF Trivia Event on October 1st. She did such a fantastic job, that many people asked for her speech to be printed in the newsletter. So here it is. Get your tissues.

It's hard to condense everything I'd like to say about Camp Circle Star, as well as Renee and Joe Eickmeier, into a few minutes, but I promise I will.

The best way I can describe what Camp is like for our son, Peter, is to ask you to think of your favorite, most comforting place. For me, it's my Grandparent's cabin on Crosslake, MN. Sitting on the dock and looking at the water brings me a peace like nothing else. For my husband, it's Bonnot's Mill, MO, a small, quiet town, full of family memories, or maybe a great cigar on the back deck.

The place where you realize you breathe deeper than anywhere else; the kind of place you long to go. That is Camp to Peter. He longs for it, it is HIS best place.

I was trying to figure out exactly what it is about camp... it took me a while to put it in to words.

It's this - Our world is made for the typical child. Camp is the only place I've ever thought, "This is HIS world". He doesn't have to try to assimilate to routines and behaviors that don't come naturally to him. He just gets to be Peter, and have fun. He can be himself, play with bubbles for hours, jump in the pool 100 times in a row if that's what he chooses, or ring the bell out front over and over (God help his helpers' ears on those days). It's his Disney World. He asks for Camp all year long.

When you have a child with special needs, often what your child is able to participate in is limited, for a multitude of reasons. At Camp Circle Star, Renee and Joe welcomed Peter with open arms and a 'we can do that', attitude; something that can be rare to experience when you have a child with particular challenges or needs.

My husband Paul has said, "I know he's safe there, they can handle him, and that he has a wonderful time." That safety is priceless to us. In addition to autism, Peter has severe epilepsy, and his seizure activity is unpredictable. It was an act of sheer will to let him get on the bus that first morning in 2014 and be that far away from him, but we really wanted him to have this experience.

Just three hours in to his very first day at Camp, our worst fear happened. Peter had seizures for close to an hour. Renee is a master of organization, preparation, and willingness to roll with it. The care she gave him, following the medication plan, staying in touch with me, and just as important, giving him the emotional care that he needed, was perfection.

I experienced such reassurance, and immediately called my friend, (who's son also had epilepsy and went with Peter that day while we tried not to cry in the parking lot), and said, "Our boys are JUST FINE. Listen to what just happened. She's amazing." Later that day, after I thanked Renee profusely, she said, "You know, I think we have something to learn from each of these kids. I learned more about epilepsy today, Peter taught me." Her grace still makes me cry.

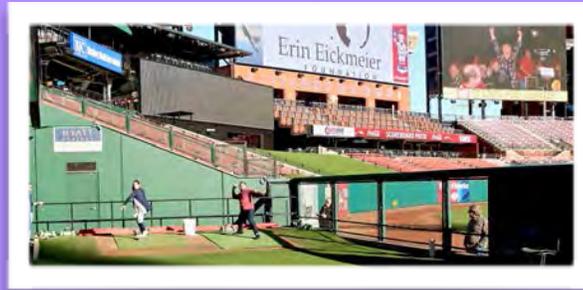
Once at pickup, I was talking to Joe, and I said, "You guys are so great"... for really, I am humbled by their energy; and he said, "Oh, the KIDS are so great." While I would expect anyone who just spent all day (including two hours on a bus) with kids who just might be a bit tiring at times, to look a bit worn out, his character shone through in his words.... they love, accept, and enjoy our kids, JUST AS THEY ARE. They see them as gifts, which is an amazing blessing to us parents, who might just be a bit tired, and need that reset.

Everyone and everything about Camp is personal and meaningful - each of the helpers Peter has had have been extraordinarily kind; they look us in the eyes, and they are professional as well as thoughtful. Everyday, Terry, who drove the bus this summer, would welcome Peter... "Here's my copilot! We're going to have a great day!"

Peter's joy on his camp days truly is like nothing else in his life. The staff and volunteers at Camp Circle Star are doing God's work, and we couldn't be more thankful.

- Anne Koetting

Save the Date - EEF Mouse Race Event April 15, 2017



The 2017 Mouse Races will be held on Saturday, April 15th at Busch Stadium!
A special VIP reception will be held again this year before the event in the dugouts!!
Space is limited for the VIP reception so register today to secure your spot in the bullpen!



Fun Day, Fun Day, Fun Day!



This fall, there has been a lot of activity at Circle Star Ranch now that we have our own transportation (yay for the bus!!) for our campers!! The EEF has hosted Fall Fun Days for our campers to give them the



opportunity to explore Circle Star Ranch with the crisp fall leaves and to provide a little break for their families as well! We are so lucky to have such a beautiful property to enjoy during every season of the year. We are already looking forward to our spring fun days!



Even though it is only December, planning for Summer 2017 is in full swing! This summer, we have six weeks of camp scheduled!

June 19-23
June 26-30
July 10-14
July 17-21
July 24-28
July 31-Aug 4

Mark your calendars, spread the word to interested families!!

Camp costs will be \$350/week for camp and \$50/week for transportation.

Interested in volunteering? Or know someone who would be a great camp buddy? Contact Renee today to reserve your spot for one or more of our camp weeks!!

Erin Eickmeier Foundation Wish List

<i>Tall Kitchen Trash Bags</i>	<i>Large Black Trash Bags</i>
<i>Windex</i>	<i>Dish Soap</i>
<i>Dishwasher Detergent</i>	<i>Laundry Detergent</i>
<i>Dryer Sheets</i>	<i>Corn Starch</i>
<i>Baking Soda</i>	<i>Washable Tempra Paint</i>
<i>Glue</i>	<i>Washable Markers</i>
<i>Liquid Hand Soap Refills</i>	<i>Baby Wipes</i>
<i>Non Latex Gloves</i>	<i>Water Balloons</i>
<i>Spray Sunscreen</i>	<i>Paper Towels</i>
<i>Tissues</i>	<i>Toilet Paper</i>
<i>Rice Chex Cereal</i>	<i>Goldfish Crackers</i>
<i>Animal Crackers</i>	<i>Rice Krispies</i>
<i>Graham Crackers</i>	<i>Pretzels</i>
<i>Bottled Water</i>	<i>Shaving Cream</i>
<i>Sidewalk Chalk</i>	<i>8 1/2" x 11 Printer Paper</i>

Walmart, Amazon & Target Gift Cards

Donate Now

The EEF is a 501c3 organization. All donations are tax deductible.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___OTHER

___ I HAVE A ITEM TO DONATE FOR YOUR AUCTION

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The Erin Eickmeier Foundation
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Mouse Race Event 4/15/17!