



Charity Partner Testimonial Series: Sibling Connections

Jen Sullivan, Sibling Connections' Board Member: The mission of Sibling Connections is uniting children who have been separated from their siblings by the foster care system in Massachusetts. Camp as a whole is our opportunity to bring over 100 siblings who have been separated by foster care together for a week of fun and just being kids. I think there are a lot of stressors in their day to day life, and so we do everything we can to make sure that none of them exist in this place. So, Camp we really want to be their happy place for them to get to spend time with their siblings, but also get time with a community that they may or may not have known that existed, get to spend time with others like them, and just have fun.

Jen: Rodman for Kids has impacted our organization both for individuals on a personal level, as well as on an organizational level. Personally, our staff has been able to do professional development and things that really improve the way that we're able to provide services to our kids. Organizationally, obviously Rodman is one of our biggest fundraising opportunities. We've been able to get out into the community with the Ride, and also partnering with over 40 other Partner Organizations to learn their best practices for fundraising. So it's really had an immense impact for us. The amount that we've been involved with Rodman over the last year has allowed us to move from serving around 70 kids last year to over 100 kids this year at our summer camp.

Jen: I was talking to a camper earlier today actually who said, "Wait...is everyone here in foster care?" She didn't have the realization that she had such a big community, that there were others like her. Without camp and bringing her together, I think it really helped her come to terms with her situation, realize she's not alone, and feel like she really has a place where she fits in here. None of that would be possible without Rodman. It's really important everything you guys do for us to make camp possible.

Benjamin, Camp Counselor & Former Program Participant: I started as a camper when I was 14 with two of my sisters, Katherine and Terry. We found out about camp through our social worker. I'm 23 now and this is my first year as a counselor!

Benjamin: One of the impacts camp has is it fosters a sense of belonging (pun intended!). I feel like I notice the way that friends will show up on the first day and it seems as though they're kind of like withdrawing or they might want to hide certain parts of themselves because in most spaces outside of camp, we might be the only foster kids we know. To see other kids that just are walking and breathing and doing just the same things as you, very human, I feel like it helps to, whether or not they're conscious of it, humanize their own experience. I feel like, at the end of the week, I always see campers going home what feels like a lot more confident than the way they came, and that's really special to me, too, because that's also the way that I feel.

Benjamin: One thing that has been very impactful for me is the way that these kids / my campers make me feel proud to be a foster kid. I work with kids anyways, and the way that I see friends showing up for each other, and showing up for even the adults, and just showing up to be their best self, and to be a good sibling, it warms my heart and it makes me think of the times I had with my sisters here. It makes me feel very grateful. I feel very lucky to be able to come back to camp and hopefully come back for as many years to come.