



Record 215 MA children served by DCF enjoy summer camp with support from the Wonderfund

For Immediate Release

Media contact: Peter Howe/Denterlein 617.482.0042

BOSTON, October 11, 2017 – Helping children served by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families experience the fun, opportunities for growth, and happy memories of summer camp is a core mission for the Wonderfund, the state’s newly relaunched charity supporting children in DCF care.

This summer, the Wonderfund helped a record 215 kids participate in camp, up 15 percent from 2016, thanks to \$120,000 raised from donors as well as “camperships” donated by several participating day and overnight camps, Wonderfund Executive Director Jennifer Kitchenham announced today.

At camping programs throughout the Commonwealth, children served by DCF experienced the “moments that matter” that are at the heart of the Wonderfund’s vision:

- “I didn’t think I had people that loved and cared about me until I came to camp,” said one child who attend Sibling Connections’ Camp To Belong (CTB), which allows brothers and sisters who have been separated when removed from unsafe homes to reunite. “Now throughout the year, I can look back and know that people love and care about me. I found a place that I belong too.”
- “For the first time, I can fall asleep at night knowing my sister is next to me—I know where she is,” said another CTB camper.
- At YMCA Cape Cod, counselors discovered that a boy who’d struggled with enjoying reading and low test scores loved engineering. The gift of a book about engineering, robots, and technology from the Y’s Literacy Program inspired him to take up reading, and he even produced a hand-written book report about his favorite topics covered in his new book.
- At Crossroads Massachusetts, which hosted 24 young people referred by the Wonderfund, a young man who has been through several foster homes successfully committed himself to following rules to ensure he could complete the camp program. “I feel like I am in a place where people believe in me,” he said.

"These are just some of the hundreds of stories we are so grateful and inspired to hear about how positive summer camp experiences can transform the lives of the children the Wonderfund is devoted to serving," Kitchenham said. "Our goal for 2018 is to double the number of opportunities for children the Wonderfund serves to participate in summer camp, and the response from our supporters, donors, and camp leaders has been tremendously encouraging that we can together make this happen for our kids."

Crossroads President Deb Samuels said: "The Wonderfund is able to help us identify youth that will benefit the most from our support and enrichment programming during the summer. It's an ideal partnership for us, and a big step in creating a collaborative continuum of care and support and stability for young people who have faced a lot of change."

Kat Moser, Director of Camp and Aquatics for the YMCA of the North Shore's Camp Tricklin' Falls, which welcomed two Wonderfund-supported children as "leaders in training" at its summer session, said, "At Y camp it does not matter where you come from, what your background is or what you have or do not have. It matters that you laugh, have fun, feel safe, and stay active and engaged, all while being an integral part of our camp community."

In addition to more than 35 scholarships for camp sessions donated to the Wonderfund by member Y's of The Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs, Crossroads and Sibling Connections/Camp to Belong made several spaces available at substantially discounted rates.

The Wonderfund, a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) federally tax-exempt charity, was formerly known as the DCF Kids Fund and relaunched in June 2017 with support from Massachusetts First Lady Lauren Baker, who serves as the Wonderfund's vice chair. The Wonderfund has a vision to provide resources and opportunities above what state funding can do, for the more than 50,000 children engaged with DCF on any given day:

- Emergency and transitional items: Children placed in DCF care, some with no more than the clothes on their backs, are given a duffel bag that contains clean, seasonally appropriate clothing, new pajamas, toiletries, and an age-appropriate item of comfort such as a teddy bear.
- Enrichment opportunities: All children involved with DCF are eligible for funding from the Wonderfund to access enrichment activities like summer camp, arts & music lessons, sports, SAT preparation, or vocational training that can change the trajectory of their lives for the better.