

Camp M.A.S.H. was a refuge to a sense of normalcy each year for kids like myself battling JRA and related diseases. Being at camp was an opportunity to just be myself and not worry about my JRA for an entire week. As a young child, you don't want to have to worry about doctor's appointments, PT/OT appointments, or getting poked for blood. Camp M.A.S.H. was one of those worry free places for me. Camp was the one week where I never felt "different" because of my JRA. Everyone had to take many medications, wear hand splints every night, do daily exercises, and needed those few extra minutes each morning to stretch out their joints. Not only was camp a fun place to be, it was also a very eye-opening and educating experience for those like myself with JRA. Camp M.A.S.H. was the only opportunity I had to socialize with kids my own age, who could share in my own daily struggles and battles with this disease. For me personally, I really got to know the disease through my friends at camp, as campers often share their experiences with one another throughout the week. For me, as I "grew-up" at camp over the years, I made some really great friends, who all helped me find a place where I "fit" in. I found a group of people who could sympathize with me - they knew exactly how I felt about the various conditions and struggles of living with JRA. To me, Camp M.A.S.H. made every shot, every doctor's appointment, every blood test I had to endure throughout the year worth it!

Today, I work full-time for our local children's Museum in Milwaukee, overseeing its Visitor Services department, and I am very involved with the WI Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation through special events, advocacy, and of course Camp! I currently am on the planning committee for camp and have been a counselor for two years.

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8-Year Camper
Camp M.A.S.H. Volunteer/Counselor