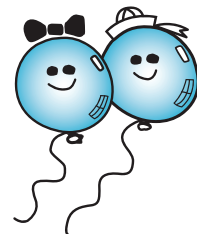


Dr. Moises Simpser Ventilation Assisted Children's Center Camp

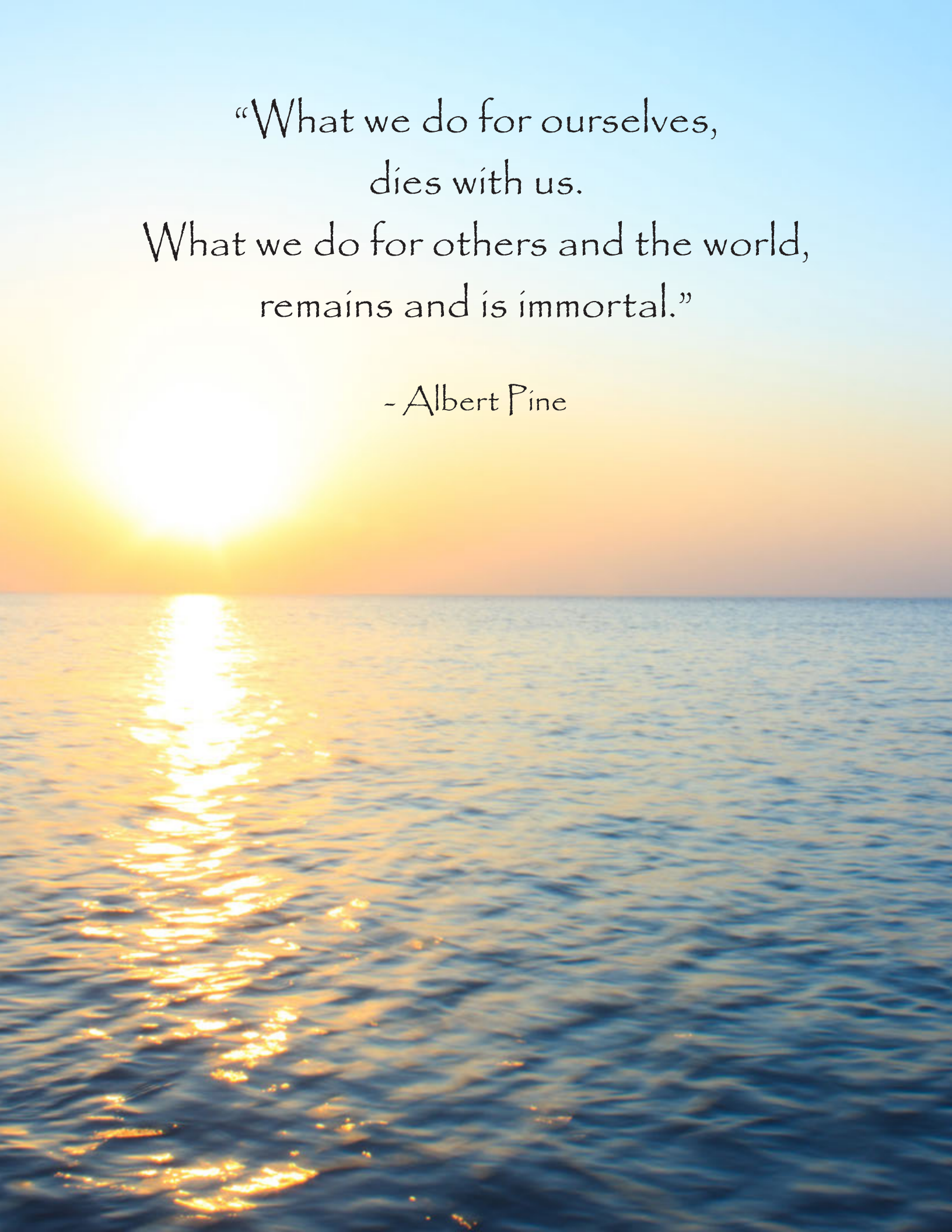


Nicklaus
Children's
Hospital



Dr. Moises Simpser

**VACC
CAMP**



“What we do for ourselves,
dies with us.
What we do for others and the world,
remains and is immortal.”

- Albert Pine

This book is designed to illustrate the impact of VACC Camp on the many people who have been involved in camp. This includes the campers, their families and the many people who have made VACC Camp possible throughout the past 31 years.

Each spring in Miami, Florida, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, formerly Miami Children’s Hospital, hosts a free week-long overnight camp for ventilation assisted children (children needing a tracheostomy ventilator, C-PAP, Bi-PAP, or oxygen to support breathing) and their families. Overnight campers come from throughout the United States and internationally. South Florida families join in as day campers.

VACC Camp gives families a fun opportunity to socialize with peers and enjoy activities not readily accessible to technology dependent children. The program includes swimming, field trips to local attractions, campsite entertainment, structured games, “free play”, and more – all to promote family growth and development while enhancing individual self-esteem and social skills. Parents have formal and informal opportunities to network among themselves.

The impacts that camp has provided to the campers and their families include but are not limited to:

- Networking (Parents) learning from each other and helping each other
- Building relationships with the teen volunteers during the camp that last for life
- Realizing their potential and gaining confidence to reach their fullest potential
- Feeling accepted by society

In addition to the life changing impact on the campers and their families, VACC Camp has just as much of an impact on the people who make camp possible. To run a camp of this size and nature, it takes the involvement of a whole community. The range of people and efforts includes teen and adult volunteers who gives us time, professional volunteers who provide services, supplies, medical equipment, food, etc., donors, sponsors and community partners.

The communities of people who have participated in the preparation and running of camp, plus those who help in making camp possible have been impacted with life changing effects in the form of:

- Change in careers choices
- Enhancing their quality of life and learning to appreciate and be thankful
- Learn to see the person beyond the disability
- Spiritual and emotional growth

The book will be divided by category of participants. Each category will include a definition and a brief description of the people who are included in that category. There will also be a section that will include testimonies and photos from campers, volunteers and sponsors through the years.

The information in the book comes from a combination of those participants that we were able to get in touch with. There are many other camp participants who we were unable to contact. Many will be mentioned in the book. Most of the information was gathered by personal testimonies. For some of the campers that we have not been able to contact, the information was gathered by responses to the questions in their applications. Earlier we mentioned that our hope in writing and compiling this book was to illustrate the impact that VACC Camp has had on so many people involved in VACC Camp. At this time we would like to convey other purposes and reasons for the book.

It takes a very special type of person to be involved in VACC Camp, such as those who have participated throughout the years. These people give their time and commitment unselfishly without asking for anything in return. The paradox of this unselfish giving is that the benefits of their efforts have exceeded all expectations. This has been expressed and described as receiving one of the most precious gifts in life "The receipt of unselfish love from those with life impairments, the satisfaction of enhancing lives of others and an appreciation of life."

There are many people who have graciously provided resources to the camp and some for almost as many years as the existence of camp. These people however, have not had the opportunity to participate in the daily activities, therefore have not been able to experience the heartfelt rewards and benefit as those who have had the opportunity to participate. As you will realize after reading the many testimonies and hearing how camp has improved the lives of the campers, their families and participating volunteers, you will have a much clearer understanding and appreciation of what camp accomplishes. We want to share our experiences and rewards with the population of people who have helped make camp possible but have not received the benefits that we as active participants do.

Finally, it is hoped that this book will also illustrate the impact of VACC Camp to other people in our communities that may not know what VACC Camp is or does. We hope to inspire them in order to gain more support for VACC Camp by making them aware of the benefits of VACC Camp.

We are seeking to encourage the endless continuation of VACC Camp.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to all those who have made this book possible by contributing their time, their testimonials, and their talent and encouragement. Most of the book is comprised of stories and testimonies of campers, volunteers, providers, sponsors, and community partners who have contributed in one way or another to the success of VACC Camp. The rest has been compiled by Bela Florentin, VACC Camp Coordinator since 1998 to present in conjunction with Rose Ann Farrell, Volunteer Assistant coordinator for the past 25 years.

A special recognition for photographs from Michael Carlebach, Christine Breslin, Noelia Beno, Allison Langer, Dan Perez, and Graciela Valdes.

Thanks to Roberto Perez.

Table of Contents

SECTION ONE: *History and Vision of VACC Camp*

SECTION TWO: *VACC Camp Today*

Direction and Leadership

- Moises Simpser, MD, FAAP, FCCP - *VACC Camp Founder/Director 1986-2017*
- Maria E Franco, MD - *Director of Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp*
- Bela Florentin - *Coordinator - Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp*
- Rose Ann Farrell, LCSW - *Volunteer Assistant Coordinator*
- Ivette Hidalgo, MSN, ARNP - *Camp Clinical Coordinator*

Volunteer Nurses

- Laura Hernandez, DNP, ARNP, CPN, FNP-c
- Monica Stouffer, RN - *volunteer and donor/sponsor*
- Rosie Roche MSN, ARNP, PhD - *volunteer nurse practitioner*
- Karen Cabezas, RN - *volunteer nurse*

Respiratory Therapists

- Javier Hernandez, RRT
- Osvaldo Fernandez RRT, MHSA

Camp Child Life Specialist

- Diane Morales, CCLS

Volunteer Support Staff

- Iris Cicero - *gourmet breakfast queen*
- John Rogers - *sausage man*
- Michael Miehl - *operations staff*
- Eliana Lyne - *operations staff*
- Alyssa Garcia - *operations staff*
- Anthony Camejo - *operations staff*

Photographers

- Allison Langer
- Graciela Valdes
- Nancy Lyons

Video

- Dan Perez

Pediatric Pulmonology Group of South Florida

- Dr. Antonio M. Rodriguez
- Dr. Maria E. Franco
- Dr. Alicia Della Volpe

Nicklaus Children's Hospital Administration support for VACC Camp

Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Support - Departments

- Marketing, Website and Biomedical Photography
- Patient and Family Services
- Food services
- Plant Operations
- Risk Management
- Material Services
- Fiscal

Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Foundation

- Richard Perez
- Michael Mowatt
- Pietro Bonacosa
- Joanne Bogdon Diaz
- Annia Martinez

SECTION THREE: VACC Camp in the Beginning

Past Staff and Volunteers

VACC Camp Coordinator

- Cathy Goe-Klein

Camp Clinical Coordinators

- Barbara Donaghy, ARNP
- Linda McCutcheon, ARNP
- Tara Kelly-Gomez, ARNP
- Laura Hernandez, ARNP
- Dania Vazquez MSN, ARNP

Staff and Volunteer Nurses

- Brian Hannigan, RN
- Carol Montiel, RN – “Gourmet Queen for 20 years”
- Joseph De Santis, PhD, ARNP

Staff and Volunteer Respiratory Therapist

- Carlos Gallostra, CRT
- Noelia Beno, RT - *plus photographer*

Camp Child Life Specialist

- Joneen Corrao
- Marlene Sotelo
- Kimberly Morris
- Shannon Hickson
- Jennnifer Justice
- Heather Silva
- Shanon Monnig
- Lauren Sparkman-Hamed
- Jennnifer Ponder
- Caitlin Thomas
- Danielle Furio
- Brittany “BB” Brown

Volunteer support staff

- Carol Montiel
- Frank Marques - *volunteer staff and lately photographer*
- Mark Chibis

Volunteer Photographers

- Michael Carlebach
- Christine Breslin
- Allison Langer
- Graciela Valdes
- Nancy Lyons

Video

- Gary Civins
- Dan Perez

Foundation

- Lucy Morillo, Esq
- Ambassador David M. Walters
- Ann Lyons

SECTION FOUR: Camper and Camper Families by Year

SECTION FIVE: Volunteers

- That have been team leaders over the years
- That have given 3 or more years of service and those from years 2016 and 2017 which we expect will continue volunteering.
- Special volunteers, sponsors and donors of services/supplies

SECTION SIX: Testimonials

- Camper families
- Volunteers – Teenagers and Adults
- Medical Volunteers
- Staff and Volunteer Staff
- Sponsors and Donors of Supplies
 - Hospital and Foundation Administration

Disclaimer:
Credit and recognition to all persons who have contributed, participated and volunteered in camp may not be complete. This is mostly due to the fact that people have moved, have new phones, new email addresses and never communicated to us their new information so we do not have a 100% information of everyone that participated. If you happen to be one of these persons, send us your information and a testimonial and we will add it to the book.

SECTION I

History and Vision of VACC Camp

Per Dr. Moises Simpser, in the summer of 1984, he was invited by the surgeon general at the time, Dr. Everett Koop to a meeting to discuss fragile children. Only doctors and parents of children depending on some type of technology attended. There he met the chairman of SKIP whose acronym stood for Sick Kids (need) Involved People. They formed the first SKIP camp in Miami.

This first camp was known as SKIP Family Learning Retreat and its purpose was to bring entire families from across the country to Miami, Florida for the "vacation of their lives" as Joan Gebo, Skip Chapter Director at the time said. Also to educate and unite these families of chronically ill children with others who had similar disabilities. Carol Montiel, RN was actively involved in the creation of the camp and participated every year thereafter until the year 2002. Barbara Donaghy, ARNP and the parents of two of Dr. Simpser's patients were also involved in the camp start-up.

When the local SKIP chapter dissolved in 1986, and there were liability issues, Dr. Simpser elected to continue his camp as offshoot of Nicklaus Children's Hospital (former Miami Children's Hospital) Ventilation Assisted Children's Center (VACC Camp). This was possible thanks to Ambassador Walters, President of the Miami Children's Hospital Foundation at the time, who adopted the camp and made the hospital responsible and the monies initially came from the foundation. He established an endowment for the VACC Camp and the foundation would match all donations up to \$250,000.

VACC Camp celebrated in March 2016 its 30th anniversary. For the past 31 years this amazing camp has been bringing to these families the opportunity to be like any other family and has allowed these children to have a camp experience like any other child without a disability does.

VACC CAMP MISSION

The Mission of VACC Camp is to bring campers together in the fun, friendly, happy setting where they have an opportunity to socialize with their peers, experience the acceptance of the greater community, and engage in activities that will help them realize their full potential as families and as individuals. The Mission of VACC Camp in respect to the volunteers who make camp possible is for all volunteers to enjoy a fun, friendly, happy experience through which they develop confidence and comfort interacting with children with special needs.

VACC CAMP PROGRAM GOALS

- To provide recreation for ventilation assisted children and their families
- To provide an opportunity for ventilation assisted children and their family members to socialize with other families who face similar challenges at home.
- To stimulate the personal development of ventilation assisted children by expanding their world view.
- To give ventilation assisted children and their families positive experiences interacting with the community at large
- To create public awareness and acceptance of technology dependent children.

SECTION II

VACC Camp Today



Moises Simpson, M.D., FAAP, FCCP
VACC Camp Founder/Director 1986-2017

Dr. Moises Simpson was born and raised in México City, México, and was a citizen of the USA. He went to Medical School at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), México City, where he graduated with honors. He did a three years residency at Hospital Infantil de México. He then moved to Boston Children's Hospital where he did a fellowship in Pediatric Pulmonology (Harvard Medical School.) Then, he did an extra two years of Pediatrics at Boston City Hospital (Boston University.)

After training he moved to the Children's Hospital of New Jersey (United Hospitals), affiliated with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), where he was the Director of the Pediatric ICU and Pediatric Pulmonology. He was an instructor and then Assistant Professor at UMDNJ. He moved to Miami Children's Hospital in 1984 and was the Director of the Divisions of Pulmonology and Pulmonary Care.

Since his arrival to Miami Children's Hospital, he developed the largest home care ventilator program in the State of Florida and created the first respirator camp (VACC) in the world. He initiated the first Cystic Fibrosis Center affiliated with the National Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. He started an asthma center for underprivileged children because he believes that everybody is entitled to high quality of medical care.

Dr. Simpson was the author of two dozen papers and abstracts and participated in multiple research projects, as well as, contributed with multiple educational programs for physicians, healthcare professionals, educators, parents and community agencies.

He was a Trustee of Miami Children's Hospital and was member of the Medical Board. He was a member of the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Thoracic Society and others. Dr. Simpson has taken a leadership role in the American Lung Pediatric Association's lung disease prevention programs for many years.

In 1995 at the 10th anniversary celebration, Dr. Simpson received several honors for his VACC Camp. He was presented with the following:

- A Proclamation by the City of Miami
- The Key to the City of Miami
- A Proclamation from the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
- The flag of the United States
- A personal letter from President Bill Clinton from the White House

He had been working with Medicaid for many years trying to reduce the rate of admissions for asthma and improve the quality of life of the children with asthma and their families. In 1997 he received a grant "Attacking Asthma" in partnership with Medicaid Area 11 and The Health Council of South Florida. Working with this grant and the Miami Children's Hospital asthma center, there has been a reduction of 70% to 85% in emergency room visits and 95% reduction in the admission rate for asthma. The length of stay for asthma has been reduced from 5.3 days to 2.7 days and currently following an asthma pathway to 1.3 days.

In 1998 the American College of Chest Physicians presented Dr. Simpson with its prestigious Governors Community Service Award. In 1999 he received the Physician Humanitarian Award during the 10th Annual Medical Business Award Ceremony.

Dr. Simpson was named to the Dade County Medical Association Board of Directors for the 2000-2001 year.

In the October 2000 issue of Miami Metro Magazine's article "Top Docs 2000" Dr. Simpson was featured as one of the best physicians in South Florida.

Dr. Simpson received the first Lucent Technologies Humanitarian of the Year award. He was honored with this award during the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Twelfth Annual "Superbowl of Fashion" October 22, 2000.

December 6, 2000, he received a congratulations letter from The Honorable United States Senator Bob Graham.

November 2001 Dr. Simpson received the prestigious International Award "Dr. Federico Gomez" given by the highest institution of teaching in Mexico and Latin America, The Hospital Infantil de Mexico.

In October 2003, Dr. Simpson was awarded the CHEST Foundation 2003 Governors Community Service Award, including a \$7,500 grant for VACC Camp.

January 2004 Dr. Simpson was elected President of the Medical Staff at Miami Children's Hospital.

In April 2004 he received the "Health Care Hero" award from the Miami Chambers of Commerce.

December 3rd, 2004, Dr. Simpson received the "Drs. Paul and Marsha Haber Protector of the Children" Award from the Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Project of South Florida, Inc.

In July 2005 Dr. Simpson was elected for Induction into the Miami Children's Hospital Hall of Excellence, the ceremony took place August 25th, 2005.

During VACC Camp's 20th Anniversary session in 2006, April 10th was proclaimed as VACC Camp and Dr. Moises Simpson's day by Mayor Carlos Alvarez of Miami-Dade.

In November 2008 Dr. Simpson received the "Journey of Dreams" Inspiration Award from Parents to Parents of Miami, Inc.

In November 2010 a presentation to the House of Representatives was done by the Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen on November 29th to congratulate Dr. Simpson and MCH for the upcoming 25th anniversary of VACC Camp.

During VACC Camp 2011 25th anniversary celebration on March 16th, Ms. Debbie Zimmerman, Chief of Staff for Ileana Ros-Lehtinen presented Dr. Simpson with the proclamation/presentation and a documentary was created on the whole week of camp by Dan Perez. This documentary won several awards

In 2012, Dr. Simpson stepped down from being the Director of the Division of Pulmonology, remained as Director of the Ventilation Assisted Children's center, Director of the VACC Camp and became the Director of the Asthma Center.

In 2016 during the VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration, Dr. Simpson received a proclamation from Dade County Mayor Carlos A. Jimenez naming March 24th Dr. Simpson's Day and another proclamation honoring VACC Camp also on March 24th. He also received a beautiful plaque from the Hard Rock Café in celebration of VACC Camp's 30th anniversary and a beautiful torch from all his VACC Camp family, for all his guidance and support during the 30 years that he has directed the VACC Camp. He also received in 2016 the Attending of the year award during the resident's graduation ceremony.

March 18th, 2017 the hospital honored Doctor Simpson by naming the camp Dr. Moises Simpson VACC Camp. He was really moved and said this was his most meaningful award in being recognized by peers and the hospital for his life's passion with VACC Camp. Dr. Moises Simpson's passion was his VACC Camp for the past 31 years.

October 5, 2017 Dr. Moises Simpson after having been ill for the past 2 years decided to step down as Director of the Dr. Moises Simpson VACC Camp and together with his partners, Nicklaus Children's Hospital and Miami

Children's Hospital System's support, it was decided that Dr. Maria E. Franco will be the new Dr. Moises Simpson VACC Camp Director. October 10, 2017 Dr. Moises Simpson passed away but his legacy will continue and VACC Camp will continue to be the best week of the year for the many camper families that have participated and will participate in the future.



Dr. Maria E. Franco
Dr. Moises Simpson VACC Camp Director, starting October 2017

Dr. Maria Franco was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. She is a citizen of the United States. She went to Medical School at Nuestra Señora del Rosario School of Medicine in Bogotá, Colombia. She did a mandatory rural social service as a general practitioner in the Hospital San Francisco in Cundinamarca, Colombia. She was a pediatric resident in the Children's Hospital Lorencita Villegas at Nuestra Señora del Rosario School of Medicine in Bogotá, Colombia. Then she did an externship at the Division of Pulmonology at the Miami Children's Hospital in Miami, Florida. She did her Pediatric Pulmonology Fellowship in St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, PA. and her PL-3 Pediatric Residency at Allegheny University for the Health Sciences, Hannemann Program, Philadelphia, PA in order to fulfill requirements for the American Board Of Pediatrics. She was the Chief Resident in Pediatrics at Crozer Chester Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Dr. Maria Franco is Board certified in Pediatrics and Pediatric Pulmonology. Since 1997 she is an Attending in the Pediatric Residency Program and Pediatric Intensive Care Fellowship at Nicklaus Children's Hospital where she is also part of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology.

Dr. Franco was the Asthma program director from 1998 to 2005. She has been the Director of the Cystic Fibrosis Center since 2006 and was the coordinator of the New Born Screening for Cystic Fibrosis for the State of Florida from 2007 to 2012.

Dr. Franco is in the Board of Directors of the Nicklaus Children's Hospital since 2009. She has done volunteer work as a Pediatric Intensivist and pediatrician with "Operation Smile" since 1997 to 2011 and is a Voluntary Clinical Faculty Member of the Florida International University College of Medicine since 2008.

Dr. Franco became the Director of The Dr. Moises Simpson VACC Camp in October 2017.

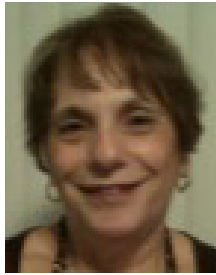


Bela Florentin
Coordinator, Dr. Moises Simpson VACC camp

Bela was born in Caracas, Venezuela and spent the first half of her life there. She studied computer programming, got married and had her 2 children while owning a party planning business. Her time was spent between her family and her business until her family moved to Miami in 1981 and she went back to school, graduated with a major in Economics and Finance and a minor in accounting.

She accepted a position as Asthma Grant Manager at Miami Children's Hospital in December 1996, working directly with Dr. Moises Simpson. Once the Asthma Grant project came to an end in December 1997 the VACC camp coordinator at the time had left and Dr. Simpson asked her if she would consider staying to help him coordinate the VACC Camp that year.

Since then and for the past 21 years, Bela has been the VACC Camp Coordinator.



Rose Ann Farrell, L.C.S.W.
Volunteer Assistant Coordinator

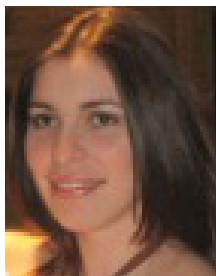
Rose Ann was born in Pittsburgh, PA, and lived there until she was five years old. Her family moved to Miami. She has remained in the Miami-Dade area ever since. Her father died six years after their move to Florida when she was only 12 years old. Her mother was left with 6 children to raise on her own. Rose Ann graduated from Hialeah High and did not go to college until later in her thirties. Immediately after graduating from High School she began her first career as a professional dancer. She performed both locally and in South America.

While dancing, she got married and had two wonderful sons. Her marriage ended in divorce early in her dancing career and she needed to make a change in her profession. She began working in the accounting field, which was her focus in high school. She worked primarily in the import/export industry in accounting and as a business manager. After several years in this field, she decided it was time to go back to school to begin another career.

At this time in her life, she felt a strong desire and need for a more rewarding career. Because of all the hardships she had overcome, the death of her father and raising children on her own, she decided to seek a career in mental health. In this manner she could apply the knowledge and insights she had gained from her own life experiences to assist others with their struggles and hardships. She began her pursuit, first obtaining a Master's Degree in Social Work and then becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), all while working full time and raising her two sons "teenagers" at the time.

She graduated in 1991 and began working at Nicklaus Children's Hospital, formerly Miami Children's Hospital in 1993 as a pediatric social worker in Dr. Simpser's office. In this position, she became involved in VACC Camp, the beginning of a tremendous opportunity and life-fulfilling mission. She was involved in all the planning and preparations for camp with her primary focus on recruiting and training teen volunteers, and additionally overseeing the activities and teen volunteers throughout the week of camp.

She was never expected or asked to stay and sleep overnight at the camp. During her first day at camp, she was so touched by the spirit of camp created by the volunteers and the response of the campers and families that she immediately said, "Bring me a cot, I am staying" and she has slept at camp every night since. In time due to reorganization she was assigned to another department in the hospital but she has always said: "they can take you out of a department, but they cannot take VACC Camp out of your heart." After leaving the hospital she started working in the Public School System but she continued to stay involved in VACC Camp now over 25 years.



Ivette Hidalgo, MSN, ARNP
Camp Clinical Coordinator

Ivette was born in Oriente, Cuba. At the age of four her parents decided to move to Venezuela searching for freedom. She lived in Venezuela for four years and at the age of eight her family moved to the United States.

She graduated from High School and went to University of Florida. She wanted to become a doctor so she enrolled in the pre-med program. She obtained her associates in Arts and Sciences from the university and then decided that she did not want to attend medical school.

She moved back to Miami, undecided and unsure of what she wanted to study. She volunteered in the summer in West Gables Rehabilitation Hospital hoping to find her niche. She worked closely with the nurses in the unit tending to the sick which were mostly older patients. She felt that she had found her passion and decided that she wanted to become a nurse. She obtained her Associate's in nursing from Miami Dade Community College. She worked as a floor nurse in the neurology department in Miami Children's hospital for 6 months. She got married to Amaury Hidalgo. She then worked in the respiratory unit and then decided that she wanted to

further her education. She then obtained a Bachelor's degree with honors in nursing from Florida International University.

Ivette did clinical hours in pulmonology with Rosa Roche ARNP and Dr. Simpser. She fell in love with the role that a nurse practitioner has in the lives of children with chronic illnesses and enrolled in the pediatric nurse practitioner program in Florida International University. In 2003, Ivette was offered a job in pulmonology while she was completing her Master's Degree. Her mentor and friend Rosa Roche, ARNP was always by her side guiding her and teaching her. Dr. Simpser, Dr. Rodriguez, Dr. Diaz, and Dr. Franco were very supportive always. Ivette completed her Master's Degree with honors and shortly after had her daughter.

As part of her job, Ivette became the clinical coordinator for VACC Camp in charge of medical clearance of families recruited and obtaining all medical equipment necessary for camp as well as volunteer medical personnel to assist her during the week. She is now pursuing her PhD in nursing.

She has been the camp clinical coordinator for the past 14 years.

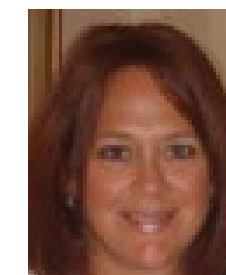
Volunteer Nurses



Laura Hernandez, DNP, ARNP, CPN, FNP-c

It all began August 7, 1995 when I was hired as a nurse clinician in the process of becoming a nurse practitioner in the department of Pulmonology under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Moises Simpser and Dr. Antonio Rodriguez and his wonderful staff. By spring 1998, I was deeply admiring my new role feeling more than immersed and competent to venture into my first virtual VACC camp experience. In August of 2001, I had a wonderful opportunity to combine an educator and clinician role and become a joint pediatric faculty for Miami Children's Hospital (MCH) and Florida International University's (FIU), College of Nursing and

Health Sciences. I am now a professor of Care of Families: Childrearing Nursing, able to instill my passion for everything that camp stands for! Now, when I am asked by students and colleagues: "What is VACC camp?" and "What does it stand for?" Where I used to say "It is a vent camp for children with lung diseases and their families" I now say: "It is a special place where anyone who attends experiences a sense of safety, security, and freedom to belong." In a very heartening way, I believe VACC camp uplifts our campers and families to forget their daily challenges and feel they can do anything they physically want to do. My students now learn their scope of practice extends beyond the hospital setting and that VACC camp is a constant avenue in these campers' lives providing diversion from limitations their medical diagnosis brings. It is my privilege to be part of the VACC camp team as I educate, advocate, and serve the children, families, students and volunteers that come together every spring at VACC camp. My fondest admiration, highest esteem and utmost respect to all involved and our VACC camp team.



Monica Stouffer, RN
Volunteer and Donor/Sponsor

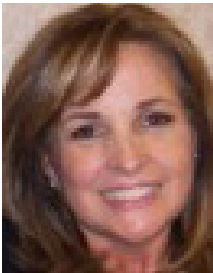
Monica was born and raised in Miami, Florida. She graduated High School in 1984 and immediately went to College after graduation with the intentions of becoming a pediatrician but due to a nasty virus her plans were put on hold. She was diagnosed with Guillian-Berré Syndrome in October 1984. She was admitted to Nicklaus Children's Hospital (former Miami Children's Hospital.) Due to total paralysis, she required a tracheostomy and was put on a ventilator. She had the BEST doctors (Dr. Simpser...) and nurses in town. She had a strong

family support system not to mention a strong will. She left the hospital five months later with the hopes of returning to College. She did return to College and went into nursing. Upon completion of nursing school, she

returned to Nicklaus Children’s Hospital and worked on the same floor that she was a patient on. Monica says “It was my way of giving a little bit back of what I received.”

She says that she uses her personal experience in her everyday practice as being a nurse. She believes it has made her a better nurse. She has four children! Two girls and two boys! Gabrielle, Brysson, Cassidy and Coltton. They love coming to camp and truly enjoy spending time with all of their pals. Her husband Jeff is supportive of her involvement with VACC and has volunteered his time also. Monica’s first year at camp, she accompanied a patient. It was that very instant that she fell in love with the camp, the concept, the volunteers, and the campers and from that moment on she became a veteran volunteer. Over the years her involvement has become more entailed. She participates in VACC Camp planning committees throughout the year. She enjoys working with the camp teenage volunteers as well as with the camper families. Her companies, Alliance Homecare Systems, Inc. and RN Consulting donate money and medical supplies to help support the camp.

Monica has been volunteering at VACC camp and donating supplies to camp for the past 27 years



Rosie Roche MSN, ARNP, PhD
Volunteer Nurse Practitioner

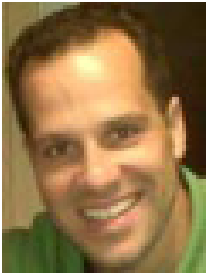
She was born in Havana, Cuba and came to the USA at the age of 4. She lived in Chicago, IL for 11 years and then moved to Miami, FL and graduated from Coral Park Sr. High in 1980 and decided to explore nursing and enrolled in the LPN program at Mercy Hospital. She loved every aspect of nursing, helping others feel better and improving their quality of life. She went on to receive her BSN from FIU in 1986 and worked for Children’s Medical Services as a Case Manager for chronically ill children. That is how she met Dr. Moises Simpser and was introduced to VACC Camp. She became a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in 1993 and has been working with Dr. Moises Simpser in the department of Pulmonology since 1992. She is also an Adjunct Faculty at FIU in the Graduate Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Program. She is married to Alfredo, who works as a Director for Miami Dade County Public Schools transportation system. He was an instrumental person in facilitating transportation for the campers during their week long camp field trips. Rosy has 3 children, Mandy, Danny and Jovan. Rosy went back to school and got her PhD in August 2014. She has been a yearly medical volunteer at the VACC Camp since 1992



Karen Cabezas, RN
Volunteer Nurse

Karen Cabezas has been a volunteer at VACC Camp since 2004. She started being one of camp regular volunteers at a young age of 14 years, and over the years, she demonstrated her capacity for leadership, team work and communication among others. She has willingly helped with any and every job there is to be done, and especially served as a companion to many ventilation assisted campers. She has been very sensitive toward campers and their needs, winning their trust and friendship and creating much good will. In 2008 she became one of the camp team leaders and until 2013 she was a very effective leader, guiding other volunteers as to what they need to do and how to do it. She had always expressed her interest in the medical field and in 2013 she graduated as an RN and since 2014 she has continued volunteering her services at VACC Camp every year, but now as a professional medical volunteer.

Respiratory Therapist



Javier Hernandez, RRT / NPS, RPFT, MHSA
Pulmonary Care Director

Javier was born in Miami as the son of Cuban immigrants. He started his career as a registered respiratory therapist at Miami Children’s Hospital in 1990 where he served in various roles. In 2003 Javier was promoted to Director of the Pulmonary Care Department, Pulmonary Function Lab and Asthma Center. He earned his Masters of Healthcare Administration degree from Barry University in 2011. Javier met his wife and fellow VACC Camp staffer Laura Hernandez, DNP at Miami Children’s Hospital and together they have 3 children, Katherine, Karolina, and William. Javier has been participating in VACC camp since 1996.

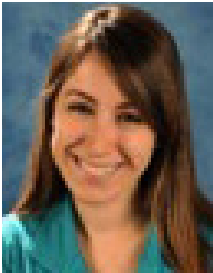


Osvaldo Fernandez RRT

Ozzie was born in Cuba 1973, his family came to Miami in 1980. He graduated high school from South West Senior High and then studied Respiratory Therapy in Miami-Dade College. He graduated 1994.

He started working at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital (former Miami Children’s Hospital) in February 2008 and worked his first VACC Camp that year. He has 4 children, Matthew, Vivian, Sophia and Melanie Fernandez. Ozzi as we all know him, is very professional, has been a Respiratory Therapist at VACC Camp every year since 2008 and works very well with the campers and their families and with the staff and volunteers medical and non-medical.

Camp Child Life Specialist



Diane Morales, CCLS

Diane is a certified child life specialist (CCLS) at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital working in the respiratory unit (3 East). As a CCLS, her goal in the hospital setting is to teach children about their diagnosis and help them and their families cope with hospitalization. Diane has a bachelor’s degree from the Florida State University in child development and Spanish as well as a master’s degree from Nova Southeastern University in developmental disabilities with a concentration in Child Life. Her first year as the child life specialist for VACC Camp was 2016, she worked with our teenage volunteers and also with all our camper families.

We look forward to many more years of Diane participating in VACC Camp.

Volunteer Support Staff



Iris Cicero & John Rogers

Iris began volunteering in college. Children have always been a focus in her life. Her first experience was tutoring inner city children. Her second experience was helping at a center for mentally challenged children. She married and began raising three step children. Today they are all successful parents and she is now the proud "Glamme" of six grandchildren. Twelve years ago, Iris and her good friend John began volunteering at VACC Camp as the "Breakfast Cooks." They committed to come in for this ONE week to help Dr. Simpser out. They fell in love with camp and have come back ever since. John has become known as "THE SAUSAGE MAN". Everyone stood in line waiting for his sausages! And guess what....Iris has become known as the "Gourmet Breakfast Queen". Everyone loves her Cherie smile in the morning. We hope they will be there for VACC Camp for many more years.



Michael Miehle
Operations Staff

Michael was born in New York and moved to Miami in 1981. He has always felt the need to give back to the community. He started volunteering coaching basketball, which is his passion, at his daughter's school. He has volunteered at the HCC, teaching the game of basketball to kids with Down Syndrome. He has mentored children at local Recreation Centers and at his church. He has been actively involved in fundraising, organizing staff and events. Michael met and volunteered alongside Dr. Simpser at the Michael Fux Holiday Event at Nicklaus Children's Hospital. He was so impressed with Dr. Simpser's humanity and the work that he does through VACC camp, that he offered his time to the camp. Since becoming a volunteer at VACC Camp, Michael has help add to VACC camp. He began a Golf Tournament Fundraiser in 2010, which has been successful since its inception and brought great sums of money. He has also brought new activities to the camp with the assistance of Home Depot. He continues to be active member of VACC camp to this day



Eliana Lyne
Operations Staff

Eliana was born in Massachusetts on February 11, 1983. She graduated from Braddock High School in June 2001. She was a part of the Future Homemakers of America and the Braddock Bunch preschool program. Eliana first came to VACC Camp in 2001 as a teen volunteer. She later became a team leader. Her love and dedication has led her to continue to be a part of camp even after getting married and becoming a mother. Eliana has been one of our valued teenagers, now a young woman, who has always gone above and beyond for the good of camp, the campers and their families and we hope she will continue in the future.



Alyssa Garcia
Operations Staff

Alyssa was born and raised in Miami, Florida and graduated from the International Baccalaureate program at Coral Reef Senior High School in 2010. She attended and graduated from the University of Miami with a Bachelor's of Science in Neuroscience and a minor in Chemistry in 2014. Alyssa first volunteered at VACC Camp in 2009 in order to complete her CAS project for the IB program. After the first day of camp, she knew she would be spending every future spring break there. Alyssa was later asked to become a Team Leader and her experience as leader helped her obtain team building and leadership skills. Alyssa has been very valuable to VACC Camp. She has shown exceptional leadership skills and is extremely dedicated to the VACC Camp. She spends endless hours throughout the year to help develop and maintain the efficiency of VACC Camp. We hope that she will continue volunteering for many years to come.



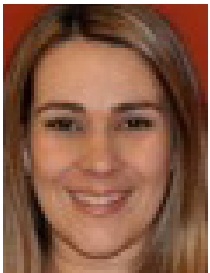
Anthony Camejo
Operations Staff

Anthony was born and raised in Miami, Florida. His family comes from Spanish descent. He graduated from G Holmes Braddock Senior High in 2008. Anthony attended Florida International University and received two minors in Biology and Chemistry. He continued his education in Nursing at Florida Keys Community College. He is employed at Baptist Health of South Florida as a Healthcare Administrator. Anthony first participated at VACC Camp in 2008 as a volunteer in need of community service hours. After the bonds created that first week, his life and reason for participating in camp were never the same. He continued to volunteer, meeting new campers and volunteers sharing the same ideals. Eventually, he was given the privilege of sharing his knowledge to new volunteers as a Team Leader. His time as a Team Leader helped him refine his leadership skills and he was able to teach a new generation of volunteers and campers the significance and enjoyment of being part of this one-of-a-kind camp. Anthony has been one our very valuable teen volunteers and leaders. He is highly dedicated to making camp a success. He spends endless hours throughout the year with the creating and planning for camp. He is also eager and willing to do anything asked of him for the sake of camp. Hopefully we will enjoy his dedication to camp for many more years.

Photographers



Allison Langer



Graciela Valdes



Nancy Lyons

Video



Dan Perez

Pediatric Pulmonology Group of South Florida



Dr. Antonio M. Rodriguez

Dr. Antonio M. Rodriguez was born in Cuba and came to the United States during his childhood.

He attended medical school at the Universidad Central del Este in the Dominican Republic, completed his pediatric residency at Miami Children’s Hospital, and in 1985 completed a fellowship in Pediatric Pulmonology at Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles. He is Board Certified in both Pediatrics and Pediatric Pulmonology.

Dr. Rodriguez came back to Miami and joined Dr. Moises Simpser in July 1985 as Associate Director of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital until 2011 when he became the director. Currently, he serves as the Director of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology and Medical Director of Respiratory Therapy and Pulmonary Function Lab at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital. In addition, since 2008, Dr. Rodriguez is the Medical Director of Miami Cerebral Palsy Residential Services, and of United Cerebral Palsy Association of Miami’s Golden Glades “Baby House”. In 1986, Dr. Rodriguez assisted Dr. Moises Simpser in starting VACC Camp and has continued to support Dr. Simpser’s mission of helping create a better life for these technology dependent children.



Dr. Maria E. Franco

Dr. Maria Franco was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. She is a citizen of the United States. She went to Medical School at Nuestra Señora del Rosario School of Medicine in Bogotá, Colombia. She did a mandatory rural social service as a general practitioner in the Hospital San Francisco in Cundinamarca, Colombia. She was a pediatric resident in the Children’s Hospital Lorencita Villegas at Nuestra Señora del Rosario School of Medicine in Bogotá, Colombia. Then she did an externship at the Division of Pulmonology at the Miami Children’s Hospital in Miami, Florida. She did her Pediatric Pulmonology Fellowship in St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, PA. and her PL-3 Pediatric Residency at Allegheny University for the Health Sciences, Hannemann Program, Philadelphia, PA in order to fulfill requirements for the American Board Of Pediatrics. She was the Chief Resident in Pediatrics at Crozer Chester Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Dr. Maria Franco is Board certified in Pediatrics and Pediatric Pulmonology. Since 1997 she is an Attending in the Pediatric Residency Program and Pediatric Intensive Care Fellowship at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital where she is also part of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology.

Dr. Franco was the Asthma program director from 1998 to 2005. She has been the Director of the Cystic Fibrosis Center since 2006 and was the coordinator of the New Born Screening for Cystic Fibrosis for the State of Florida from 2007 to 2012.

Dr. Franco is in the Board of Directors of the Nicklaus Children’s Hospital since 2009. She has done volunteer work as a Pediatric Intensivist and pediatrician with “Operation Smile” since 1997 to 2011 and is a Voluntary Clinical Faculty Member of the Florida International University College of Medicine since 2008.

Dr. Franco became the Director of The Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp in October 2017.



Dr. Alicia Della Volpe, MD

I was born in La Plata, Argentina in 1966. Studied and received medical degree at Facultad de Ciencias Medicas, University of La Plata, in 1991. I was trained in Pediatrics at Hospital Privado de Comunidad de Mar del Plata from 1991 to 1993, and in Neonatology at Hospital Interzonal Materno Infantil of Mar del Plata from 1993 to 1996. I moved to US, and did a Research Fellowship at Jackson Memorial Hospital, University of Miami, in Miami, from 1996 to 1998.

Back to Argentina, I worked as an Attending Physician in Pediatrics and Neonatology at Hospital Privado de Comunidad de Mar del Plata since 1998 to 2007.

Moved back to US, I did Fellowship in Pediatric Pulmonology at Jackson Memorial Hospital, University of Miami, in Miami, from 2007 to 2010 and then completed Pediatrics residency at Hasbro Children’s Hospital, Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, from 2010 to 2012.

After that, I worked as an Attending Physician in Pediatric Pulmonology at Nemours Children’s Clinic and at Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, Florida, from 2012 to 2015. Then moved back to Florida to become Attending Physician in Pediatric Pulmonology with The Pediatric Pulmonology Group of South Florida and Nicklaus Children’s Hospital since 2015 to now.

Administration Support for VACC Camp



M. Narendra Kini, M.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Michael Harrington
President & Chief
Operating Officer
Nicklaus Children's Hospital



Timothy Birkenstock
Chief Financial Officer
and Treasurer
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Jackie Gonzalez
Senior Vice President Chief
Nursing Officer and
Patient Safety Officer
Nicklaus Children's Hospital



Nancy Humbert
Executive Vice President of
Ambulatory Services &
External Affiliations
Nicklaus Children's Health System



April Andrews-Singh
Senior Vice President and
General Counsel
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Ed Martinez
Senior Vice President and Chief
Information Officer
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Michael Kushner
Senior Vice President and
Chief Talent Officer
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Michael Davis
Senior Vice President of
Strategy, Business Development
and Innovation
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Jose Perdomo
Vice President of Ethics &
Compliance and Privacy Officer
Nicklaus Children's Health System



Michael Durr
Vice President of Finance
Nicklaus Children's Health System

NCH Support - Departments

It takes a community effort for VACC Camp's many needs. The staff of the following departments have been more than willing to meet the needs of VACC Camp. They demonstrate an eagerness to help and have happily cooperated in providing the services needed, always with a smile on their face.

• Marketing, Website and Biomedical Photography

- Marcia Diaz de Villegas
- Juan Rabionet
- Jennifer Caminas
- Rachel Perry
- Roberto Perez
- Hortensia Cesar
- Roberto Prieto
- Romina Herrera
- Edgar Estrada
- Steven Llanes

• Patient and Family Services

- Janet Bell-Taylor - Director of Patient and Family Services.
- Irene Ballart
- Luz Gonzalez

• Food services

- Jesus Soto, until 2016
- Christopher Lorenzo in 2017
- Agustin Pacheco
- Banacek Figueroa
- Erin Corrigan
- Luz Roman
- Maria Castillo
- Ihosvany Perez
- Edmundo Alvarez
- Retha West
- Nelly Eagen
- Elsa Pinto
- Freya Labrada

• Risk Management

- Sharon Larson
- Suly Prieto

• Plant Operations

- Jesus Baez
- Oscar Rivera
- Trelvis Nelson
- Erick Butler
- Enrique Cuba
- Paubel Fonseca
- Enrique Morales

• Legal

- April Andrews-Singh
- Andre Susla

• Material Services/Purchases

- Jeffrey L. Friedman
- Silvia Perez
- Virginia Camacho
- Erico Lopez
- Jessica Olaya
- Ana Rosales
- Lisa Infante
- Maria Tuero
- Roxana Rodriguez

Everyone in administration has been supportive of the VACC Camp throughout the years.

•Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Foundation

• Richard Perez



• Michael Mowatt



• Pietro Bonacosa



• Joanne Bogdon Diaz



• Annia Martinez



SECTION III

VACC Camp in the Beginning



Past Staff and Volunteers

• VACC Camp Coordinator

• Cathy Goe-Klein



• Camp Clinical Coordinators

• Barbara Donaghy, ARNP



• Linda McCutcheon, ARNP



• Tara Kelly-Gomez, ARNP



• Volunteer Nurses

• Brian Hannigan, RN



• Volunteer Respiratory Therapist:

• Noelia Beno, RT plus photographer



• Camp Child Life Specialist

• Joneen Corrao



• Marlene Sotelo



• Kimberly Morris



• Jennifer Justice



• Heather Silva



• Shanon Monnig



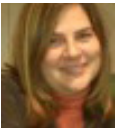
• Lauren Sparkman Hamed



• Jennnifer Ponder



• Laura Hernandez, ARNP



• Dania Vazquez ARNP, MSN, RN



• Joseph De Santis, PhD, ARNP



• Carlos Gallostra, RT



• Caitlin Thomas



• Danielle Furio



• Brittany Brown



• **Volunteer support staff**

- Carol Montiel, RN, Camp’s gourmet cook for 20 years



- Frank Marques, volunteer, general help and photography



• **Volunteer Professional Photographers**

- Michael Carlebach



- Christine Breslin



• **Foundation**

- Ambassador Walters



- Lucy Morillo, Esq



- Ann Lyons



• **Video**

- Gary Civins





SECTION IV

Camper Families

Camper Families and years attended.
All in **bold** have written testimonies that you can read in the testimonial section.

This is a list of all families that we have on record to have participated in VACC Camp since 1986 through 2017. The **blue** font are those that we know have passed away. If there is any family not mentioned in this list, please forgive the omission, contact us and we will add it.

Camper Name	Location	Years at Camp	Number of Years
Abney, Wayne	Slidell, LA	1986-87	2
Achille, Jacqueline	Miami, FL	2005-2011	7
Acosta, Mariana	Maracaibo, Venezuela	2011-17	7
Adside, Kevin Johnson	Miami, FL	1993	1
Allen, Miguel DJ	Miami, FL	1990	1
Alvarez, Christopher	Elmhurst, NY	2003, 2005-06, 2008-09, 2011-16	11
Anderson, Kareem	Miami, FL	1991	1
Andino, Daniel	Miami, FL	1999	1
Archambault, Jessica	Miami, FL	2010	1
Arias, Eric	Miami, FL	2008-2010	3
Arthur, Priscilla	Brooklyn, NY	2000	1
Atis,Taquila	Miami, FL	1999	1
Asim, Munha	Streamwood, IL	2017	1
Atwood, Brett	Miami, FL	1998-2000, 2006, 2008-2011, 2016	7
Avirett, Rebecca Danielle	Lakeland, FL	1997	1
Ayala, Issac Joshue	Miami, FL	2008-2011	4
Azpillaga, Nicole	Coral Gables, FL	1990	1
Baier, Greta	New York, NY	2015-17	3
Bauman, Richard	Lantana, FL	1987	1
Bays, Cassandra	Tornado, WV	1997, 1999, 2006, 2011 ,2016	5
Bazoa, Andres	Miami, FL	2001-03	3
Beckman, Esther	Port Orange, FL	2017	1
Benedetti, Paolo	Miami, FL	1999-2000, 2008	3
Berger, Richard Jr.	Northampton, PA	1990	1
Berner, Jerica	Council Bluffs, IA	2003	1
Boykin, Stearling	Brooklyn, NY	1995, 1999	1
Bresser, Jennifer	Melbourne, FL	1997	1
Brown, Jennifer	Hustonville, KY	1990	1
Bryan, Dwight	Miami, FL	1991, 2006	2
Buchanan, Jessica	St. Petersburg, FL	1989	1
Buchanan, Felicia	Miami, FL	1991, 2006	2
Butler, Jashawn	Bay Harbor, FL	1990	1
Caparimo, Stephen	Miami, FL	1991	1

Carrasco, Sergio	Miami, FL	1990	1
Carter, Alexander	Portage, IN	2012-13, 2016-17	4
Cevallos, Christel	Miami, FL	2012-13, 2015	3
Chavez, Maylan	Miami, FL	2013	3
Civil, Kenneth	Miami, FL	1999-2016	18
Cleeton, Kenneth “KL”	Miami, FL	2007-11	5
Clevenger, Amy	Effingham, IL	2000-01, 2006	3
Cooper, Heather A.	Cramerton, NC	2010-2013	4
Cortijo, Stephanie	Tewksbury, MA	1990	1
Cox, Justin	Miami, FL	2007-2016	9
Croce, Gavin	Wood Crossing, FL	2013-2017	5
Crump, Cheyenne	East Aurora, NY	2016-2017	2
Debose, Rehinald	Orlando, FL	2013-2017	5
Delgado, Emily	Miami, FL	2009-10	2
Demmott, Nicole	Bronx, NY	1990	1
Dinnigan, Amanda	Gainesville, FL	1986-88, 2006	4
Diaz, Jacqueline	Saint James, NY	2011-2017	7
Dolmo, Christina	Hialeah, FL	1986-87	2
Doolin, Melvin	Bronx, NY	2005	1
Dorcellus, Debbie	Antioch, CA	2006-08	3
Dunns, Synell	Miami, FL	2000,2004-2008, 2010	7
Dupont, Brittany	Delray Beach, FL	1988	1
Fauerbach, Tyler	Plantation, FL	2005-2011, 2016	8
Flores, Joshua	Miami, FL	2008-09, 2011-13	5
Fogle, Paul Allen	Miami, FL	2006, 2009-2016	9
Fogleman, Chad	Campbelltown, PA	1989	1
Foster, Whitney	Palmsprings, FL	1986	1
Frey, Garret	Miami, FL	1990, 1994	2
Gabbard, Lewis A.	Cedar Rapids, IA	1991, 1992	2
Galarza, Valeria	Xenia, OH	1990	1
Gardner, Kathryn	Miami, FL	2017	1
Gassant, Stephonne	Palm Beach gardens, FL	1997	1
Gebo, Kevin Jr.	Miami, FL	1997-2011, 2016	15
George, Aaliyah	Tallahassee, FL	1986-87, 2006, 2016	4
Gilman, Samantha	Miami, FL	2006-2008	3
Golden, Coartez	Miami, FL	1993	1
Gonzalez, Karolina	Miami, FL	1991	1
Gonzalez, Mateo	Miami, FL	2007	1
Gonzalez, Michael	Miami, FL	2013-2017	5
Gonzalez, Oscar	Miami, FL	1989	1
Grecco, Cooper	Miami, FL	1990, 1991, 1997	3
Green, Christopher	Weston, FL	2006-2008, 2016	3
Green, Derrick	Dalton, GA	1997, 2004	2
	Homestead, FL	1987-95	9

Green Jr, Wayne Barry	Miami, FL	1999	1
Griffin, Meredith Elise	Orlando, FL	2016-17	2
Hagood, Gevandas	Jersey City, NJ	2003	1
Harding, Laura	Elizabeth City, NC	1991	1
Harrison, Cory	Davie, FL	2002 -2017	16
Hart, Jennifer Claire	Miami, FL	1990, 1997-98, 2000-02	6
Henry, Serena	Miami, FL	2006	1
Hicks, Ashley	Miami, FL	2006	1
Hollister, Earl	Sycamore, IL	2006-07, 2009-10, 2016	5
Jacques, Joshua Dimitri	Miami, FL	2017	1
Jeff, Robert	Mayo, FL	1997	1
Jenkins, Landon	West Palm Beach, FL	2009-2016	8
Jones, Bridgette Nicole	Altamonte Springs, FL	1997	1
Jones, Ahmed Gamal	Miami, FL	1999	1
Kelleher, Barry	Grand Junction, CO	1991-92	2
Kempinger, William	Elizabeth City, NC	1990, 1992	2
Killings, Tiffany	Miami Gardens, FL	1987, 1990-91, 2006	4
King, Chelsea	Brooklyn, NY	2000,2002, 2006, 2011, 2016	5
King, Christopher	Brighton, MA	1990	1
Kinnane, Ellary Rose	Portsmouth, RI	2015-17	3
Kopf, Brent	Oakfield, WI	2000-01, 2006	3
LaCroix, Courtney	Covington, GA	1989	1
Lawrence	GA	1991	1
Leal, David	Hialeah, FL	1999	1
Lester, Ryan	Miami, FL	2006	1
Leyva, Jessica	Ft Mayers, FL	2011-15	5
Lloyd, Emyly	Miami, FL	2007	1
Londo, Kyla	Orlando, FL	1997	1
Lorey, Samantha	Bibbsboro, NJ	1998	1
Manasse, Sybille	Miami, FL	1999-2000, 2004-2010	9
Martin, Nicole	Miami, FL	1991	1
Martinez, Jeremy	Miami, FL	1991	1
Mauerman, Sage	Miami, FL	2016-2017	2
McCaffery, Salome	Gulfport, MS	1997-98, 2001-2009	11
Medina, Michelle	Lan O Lakes, FL	2011-2012	2
Mercado, David “Chris”	Lakeland, FL	1995,1997, 2001-02, 2004-10	11
Mesa, Diane	Miami, FL	1993-1995	3
Miller, Tiara	Ft Lauderdale, FL	2014, 2017	2
Miranda, Adam	Miami, FL	2014, 2016	2
Montgomery, Dakayla	Miami, FL	2007	1
Moore, Ashley	Miami, FL	2000-01	2
Moores, Justin	Columbia, TN	1993	1
Murray, Nathaniel	Alexandria, DC	2007, 2009	2
Nagle, Andrew James	Miami, FL	2013-17	5

Nanni, Lisa	Miami, FL	1988-2005	18	Stasierowski, Kyle T.	East Aurora, NY	1990	1
Niehaus, Morgan	Homestead, FL	1993, 1997-2000	5	Thornton, Tiffany	Miami, FL	1991	1
Olson, Laura	Gaithesburg, MD	1992, 2006	2	Tinoco, Jazmin	Miami, FL	2017	1
Ortegon, Elliot	Lombard, IL	2005-2010, 2012-13, 2016	9	Toro, Andrew	Miami, FL	1990	1
Ortiz Lugo, Enrique	Miami, FL	2007	1	Torres, Brianna	Miami, FL	2011-12	2
Osorio, Alexandra	Miami, FL	2010-2014	5	Trapp, Annelise	Plantation, FL	2003-2013, 2016	12
Osorio, Thomas	Miami, FL	2005	1	Turner, Tiffani	Spokane, WA	1993	1
Paneque, Jennifer	Miami, FL	1997-2010, 2016	15	Van, Meagan	Miami, FL	1987	1
Parras, Humberto	Miami, FL	2000	1	Vander Molen	IA	1991	1
Patrick, Andrea	Mentor, OH	2013-17	5	Velazquez, Valentina	Miami, FL	2001-03, 2005-08	7
Payne, Aisha	Florida City, FL	2008, 2010-11	3	Walker, Tishonia Latrice	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	1988	1
Pearsall, Kimberley Ann	Davison, MI	1989	1	Washington, Shaquarry	Miami, FL	2010	1
Pearson Waylonda	Miramar, FL	1989, 1991	2	Wassel	PA	1991	1
Peddy, David “Pierce”	Tampa, FL	2011	1	West, Jodeci	Bobson Park, FL	1998-1999	2
Perez, Elena	Cary, IL	2017	1	Westendorp, Aaron	Edina, MN	1999, 2006	2
Perez, Jerry	Miami, FL	1994	1	Wibbenmeyer, Logan	Perryville, MO	2014-16	3
Phillips, Sabrina	Miami, FL	1988	1	Wilcox, Susan	Naples, FL	1994	1
Picariello, Dylan	Port St Lucie, FL	2002, 2003, 2005-2010, 2016	9	Wilcox, Terry	Mobile, AL	1990	1
Plater-Zyberk, Anthony	Miami, FL	1987-88, 1990, 1993,1995, 2006	6	Williams, Jamar	Eustis, FL	1987-89	3
				Williams, John	Miami, FL	2012	1
Pollard, Don	Lithonia, GA	1989	1	Williams, Dominique	Philadelphia, PA	1994-95	2
Puente Melendez, Brian	Miami Beach, FL	2012	1	Wolliston, Alvin John Jr	Miami, FL	2010-2011	2
Quinn, Kristen	Miami, FL	1986	1	Wongden, Chonglee	Miami, FL	2003	1
Ramos, Jeremy “Alex” Dasher	Lakeland, FL	1993, 1997, 2006	3	Yi, Jina	Miami, FL	2006	1
Reams, Stephanie	Melbourne, FL	1997	1	Young, Carla	Barberton, OH	1989	1
Reckweg, Jeff	Waldork, MD	1986	1	Zambrano, Eric	Glendale, AZ	1998	1
Reyes, Christine	Cooper City, FL	1993-1995	3	Zhurenko, Yivgeney	Miami Beach, FL	2003	1
Robles, Edwin	Owasso, OK	2012	1				
Rodriguez, Crystal	Miami, FL	2005	1				
Roman, Kenney	Kissimmee, FL	2004-06	3				
Rose, Jason	Miami, FL	1986-87	2				
Russell, Malik	Miami, FL	1991	1				
Saunders, Corey	Roanoke, VA	1998-99	2				
Schmidke, Michael	Marietta, GA	1989	1				
Schneider, Amber	Lomira, WI	1993	1				
Senra, Andrew	Miami, FL	1990	1				
Shannon, Erin	Severna Park, MD	1986	1				
Shomer,Jason	Miami, FL	1991	1				
Simmonite, Peter	Miami, FL	2004-2011	8				
Simmons, Alicia	Homestead, FL	1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1998-2000	8				
Smith, Keith	Miami, FL	1990	1				
Solis, Gregory	Gainesville, FL	1987-89, 1991, 1997	5				
Starling, Phillip	Miami, FL	2006	1				



SECTION V

Volunteers

Volunteers that have been team leaders over the years

- Adriana Torres
- Alejandro Martinez
- Alexander Hernandez
- Alyssa Garcia
- Amanda Manzano
- Amar Mohabir
- Anaely Advincula
- Andrew Pena
- Anthony Camejo
- Ashley Echevarria
- Audrey Daugherty
- Brian Vazquez
- Carmen Prieto
- Christina Perez
- Daina Garcia
- Derek Wilkinson
- Eliana Lynn
- Elizabeth Gomez
- Elizbeth Simon
- Franci Vega
- Gilbert Pareja
- Ginna Gonzalez
- Heidy Armenteros
- Hunter Rodriguez
- Iliana Suero
- James Santiago London
- Janelle Falquez, ARNP
- Jennifer Leyes
- Jennifer Ramos, Esq.
- Jessica Rivero
- Joshua Miller
- Karen Cabezas, RN
- Kayla Appleby
- Kevin Maestre
- Larry Plaza
- Marcos Bengochea
- Mariajose Salamanca
- Marta Cuervo-Parekh, MS, CCC-SLP
- Maya Lowe
- Melina Sadeghi
- Miguel Chateloin
- Monica Franco
- Natalie Asorey
- Nicholas Prieto
- Nicole Umpierre
- Olivia Etienne
- Patricia Delguys
- Patricia Marrero
- Priscilla Farrell
- Ralph Padierne
- Ruben Rueda
- Stephan Mercado, PT, DPT
- Stephanie Giron
- Stephanie Sydnor
- Tatiana Pizonero-Reyes
- Tatiana Vidales
- Vanessa Barquin
- Vanessa Farrell
- Virginia Perello
- Wendy Letterman
- Zachyra Appleby

List of teenage and young adult volunteers that have given camp 3 or more years of service since camp started and those that started in 2015, 2016 and all that did 2017 which we expect to continue volunteering in future years.

Agudelo, Carolina	2016 -2017	Castillo, Natalie	2002-2004
Agudelo, Juliana	2016-2017	Chang, Christian V.	2011-2014, 2016
Ahye, Daniel	2009-2011	Chang, Eviani F.	2011-2014
Almeida, Veronica	1991-2000	Chinea, Andreina	2015-2017
Amat, Sonia	2017	Cruz, Doris	2017
Appleby, Kayla	2015-2017	Cruz, Jessica Christina	2016-17
Appleby, Zachyra	2009-2017	Cuervo, Marta	2004-2014, 2016
Arias, Janelle	2005-2008	Daugherty, Audrey	2015-2017
Arias, Natalie	2006-2008	Deleon, Marvin	2016
Armenteros-Carbot, Heidy	1991-2000	Delgado, Andy	2017
Arrocha, Ana	2016	Delgado, Samantha	2009-2011
Asorey, Natalie	2007-2012	Delguys, Patricia	2012-2017
Avila, Amanda	2016-2017	Diana, Angela	2001-2004, 2006-2008
Aviles, Jessica	2016-2017	Diaz, Ariel	2003-2004, 2006
Barber, Joseph	2001-2004	Dibujes, Vanessa	2003-2006
Barber, Janetxia	2003-2006	Dimicelli, Brittany Jean	2006-2008
Barquin, Vanessa	2008-2017	Dolan, Deanna	1992-1995
Barranco, Lauren	2006-2008	Duarte, Allison	2016
Bedoya, Noah	2016-2017	Echavarria, Valentina	2016
Bengochea, Marcos	2015-2017	Echeverria, Ashley	2011-2015, 2017
Beno, Carolyn	1999-2001, 2003-2004	Echeverria, Rachel	2011-2017
Berret, Coralie	2017	Encalada, Gabriela	2017
Breno, Cristina	1998-2000	Escobar, Erika	2005-2008
Bolaños, Maria	1998-2000	Etienne, Olivia	2014-2017
Brown, Jevon	2016-2017	Farrell, Vanessa	1999-2000, 2002-2009
Bueno, F. Ricardo	2008-2010	Farrell, Jason	2011-2014
Bueno, F. Roberto	2008-2010	Farrell, Priscilla	2004-2017
Caballero, Gabriella	2015-2017	Fernandez, Vivian	2013-2015, 2017
Cabezas, Karen	2005-2017	Ferrer, Debbie	2005-2007
Cabrera, Adriano	2017	Fife, Donald	1998-2000, 2004, 2006-2008
Cabrera, Jacqueline	2010-2012	Fitzgerald, Courteney	2005-2008
Caceres, Daniela	2017	Flamenco, Robert	2004-2008
Cadavid, Teresa	2015-2017	Florentin, Leon	1992-1994
Camejo, Anthony	2008, 2011-2017	Franco, Monica	2005-2008
Carmona, Dixie	2014-2017	Ganivet, Yvonne	1997-2007
Cash, Mina	2016-2017	Ganivet, Suzanne	2004-2007
Castillo, Adrian	2017		

Ganivet, Veronica	1997-2000	Maestre, Kevin	2009-2013, 2015-2017
Garay, Ariana	2016-2017	Manzano, Amanda C	2010-2017
Garay, Esmeralda	2016-2017	Mardones, Gabriela	2016-2017
Garcia, Alyssa	2009-2017	Marquez, Francisco	2002-2008
Garcia, Daina	2013-2017	Marrero, Patricia	2013-2017
Garcia, Jaquelin	2011-2017	Martinez, Ivette	1991-1995
Garcia, Sandra	2016	Martinez, Christopher	2001-2008
Gata, Alexander	2017	Martinez, Alejandro	2016-2017
Gata, Juliana	2017	Martinez, Emily	2017
Giron, Stephanie	2005-2008	Martinez, Hidysbeth	2012-2017
Gomez, Elizabeth	2017	Martinez, Ricardo “Ricky”	2015-2016
Gomez, Jessica	2017	Mato, Kathleen	2016-2017
Gong, Malinda	2016	Matta, Angelica	2007-2009
Gong, Miranda	2016	Maturell, Alexander	2011-2017
Gonzalez, Ginna	2005-2008	Maturell, Areila	2012-2017
Gonzalez, Stephanie	2005-2008	Mazzoli, Alyssa	2005-2007
Gonzalez, Vanessa	2001-2004, 2006-2013	Mercado, Stephan	2007-2012, 2016
Gtierrz, Melanie	2017	Merida, Kevin	2013-2015
Gurau, Elena	2017	Merida, Jazlyn	2013-2015, 2017
Hall, Leangelo	2009-2011	Miehl, Michael	2010-2017
Hernandez, Carla V	2007-2009	Miranda, Dianne	2016
Hoffer, Joey	2001, 2004, 2017	Miller, Joshua	2003-2006
Iazeolla, Alessandro	2007-2009	Mills, Monica Fife	1998,2000, 2006-2008
Ilia, Lourdes	2005-2008	Mills, Jason V	2006-2008
Infante, Maia	2017	Morales, Alejandra	2002-2004
Jacobus, Chiara M	2015-2017	Moreno, Michelle	1995-1998
Jordan, Jessica	2016	Moscoso, Maria A	2010-2012
Jorge, Giselle	1992-1994	Mowbray, Jonathan	2000-2006
Jorge, Michelle	1992-1994	Nasielski, Estefania	2004-2006
Joseph, Djimy	2015-2017	Oropeza, Jordan	2004-2006
Lafortune, Julian	2011-2013	Oropeza , Jessica	2002-2006
Lafortune, Alexander	2011-2013	Otero, Jennifer	2011-2013
Lam, Emma	2015-2017	Padierne, Ralph	1998-2000, 2002-2006
Letterman, Wendy	1995-2000	Padilla, Doris	2003-2008
Llaguno, Lorgeleys B	2016-2017	Padilla, Linda	2006-2008, 2010-2013
Llizo, Ashley	2016	Pala, Elvis	2016-2017
Londono, Santiago	2007-2015	Pareja, Gabriel	2013-2017
Leyes, Jennifer	2003-2006	Pareja, Gilbert	2010-2014, 2016
Lopez, Alejandra	2003-2007, 2009-2013	Pastoriza, Alexander	2004-2006
Lowe, Maya	2014-2017	Pastoriza, Sarah	2002-2005, 2014-2016
Lynch, Rose	2015-2017		
Lyne, Eliana	2001-2017		

Pastoriza, Jessica	2002-2005	Sanchez, Johanna (Elia)	1998-2000, 2006
Payan, Ibet	2012-2015	Sanchez-Breton, Yeleini	2016
Peinado, Jesse	2012-2014	Santana, Cindy	2016
Pena, Andrew	2007-2010	Schwartzman, Catie	2014-2017
Peña, Stephanie	2002-2008	Simon, Elizbeth	2008-2010
Perdomo, Jonathan	2016-2017	Smith, Kimberly	2016-2017
Perello, Virginia	2008-2010	Solares, Maria	1998-2000
Perez, Christina	2010-2017	Srivastava, Riya	2016-2017
Perez, Ghyselle	2003-2006	Suero, Ilana	2008-2011
Perez, Miranda	2014-2017	Sydnor, Stephanie	2009-2017
Perez, Tania	2016-2017	Tamaklo, ena	2016
Plaza, Larry	2009-2017	Tempakornkul, Thavin	2007-2010
Prieto, Carmen	1997-2008	Torres, Adriana	2013-2017
Prieto, Carlos	2000-2004	Torres Advincula, Anaely	2006, 2010-2017
Prieto, Luis	2000-2008	Torres, Daliana	2013-2015
Prieto, Jennette	2002-2004	Umpierre, Nicole	2006-2017
Prieto, Nicholas	2007-2011	Valdivia, Karla	2016-2017
Prudhomme, Arielle	2017	Valle, Yainet	2010-2017
Quintana, Alexanra	2017	Vanegas, Jenny	2016-2017
Quintero, Emily	2009-2012	Vanegas, Natalia	2016-2017
Quiros, Priscilla	2010-2011, 2015-2016	Varela, Sofia	2017
Ramirez, Carolina	2012-2013, 2015-2016	Vazquez, Brian	2008-2011
Ramos, Jennifer	2003-2006	Vazquez, Janell	2002-2017
Reyes, Maria Fe	2016	Vega, Francy	1991-2000, 2006
Reyes, Tatiana P	1997-2000, 2002-2004, 2006	Vidales, Tatiana	2002-2008
Ricardo, Tiffany	2016	Viso, Mariana	2016
Rivas, Rene Isaias	2016-2017	Wilkinson, Derek	2012-2014
Rivera, Hazel	1998-2000	Wilson, Angie	1992-1995
Rivero, Jessica	2000, 2002-2009	Yap, Jonathan A	2016-17
Rodriguez, Alyssa	2016-2017	Yen, Yuan-Chin	1992-1994
Rodriguez, Brittany	2010-2012	Yero, Yeremi	2012-2017
Rodriguez, Ernesto	2016-2017	Zamorano, Melissa	2001-2008
Rodriguez, Hunter	2013-2015	Zevallos, Julio	2013-2017
Rodriguez, Massiel	2009-2011	Zhang, Lily	2010-2012
Rodriguez, Melina	2017	There have been hundreds more volunteers not mentioned as they volunteered less than 3 years. You know who you are and we thank you for your support for camp	
Rodriguez, Sarai	2017		
Romero, Vivian	1991-1994		
Rueda, Ruben	2007-2017		
Ruiz, Nicole	2011-2014		
Sadegui, Melina	2012-2017		
Salamanca, Maria Jose	2012-2017		
Sanchez, Erika	2005-2007		

Special volunteers, sponsors and donors of services/supplies

A Kid’s Party Express	Croft Coffee
AD Barnes Park leisure access center	Crystal Springs Water
AD Barnes Pool	Dairy Queen - Kathy Smith
Air Liquide	Dan Perez Films
Alberto Montejo Magician	Designers in Motion
Alliance Home Care Systems, Inc	Dixie Catering
Allison Langer Photography	Domino’s Pizza 3806
Andy Goodyear - Wheelchair Getaways - Ventura “Vinnie” Perez	Don Long - Keep in Step
ARC Broward Culinary Institute	Drumming for Wellness
Arnold Mannis, DDS	Eckerd photo 7589-0169
Bahamas Fish Market and Restaurant	Economy Tent Rental
Bank Atlantic - Marcia Barry-Smith	Editech Corporation
Bird Bowl	El Novillo Restaurant Bird Road
Bob Bonnen	European Corner
Brian Hannigan, RN	Garciela Valdes Plum Blossom Photography
Burger King #29	Gary Civins
Calipso Connection	Graziano’s Restaurant
Canton - Mr. Teddy	Gulliver Dance Team
Canton 4 - Mr. Hein	Hands On Miami
Carlos Gallostra, RRT	Hard Rock Café
Carol Montiel	Harry Horgan - Shake-A-Leg
Carole Watson- Cingular Wireless	Hawaiian Entertainers
Celia Leyva - AD Barnes Park	Hispanic Coalition
Cheryl Volker - Therapy dogs	HNO Production, Inc. (Coral Gables & Blue Lagoon)
Christine M. Breslin	Home Depot
City of Miami Marine Patrol	Ibañez Family - Maria, Jay- Carnival
Clown Care Clowns	Imax Therater
Coconut Grove Jaycees	Iris Cicero
Coral Gables Jaycees	Island Queen Cruises
	Island Riddim Music

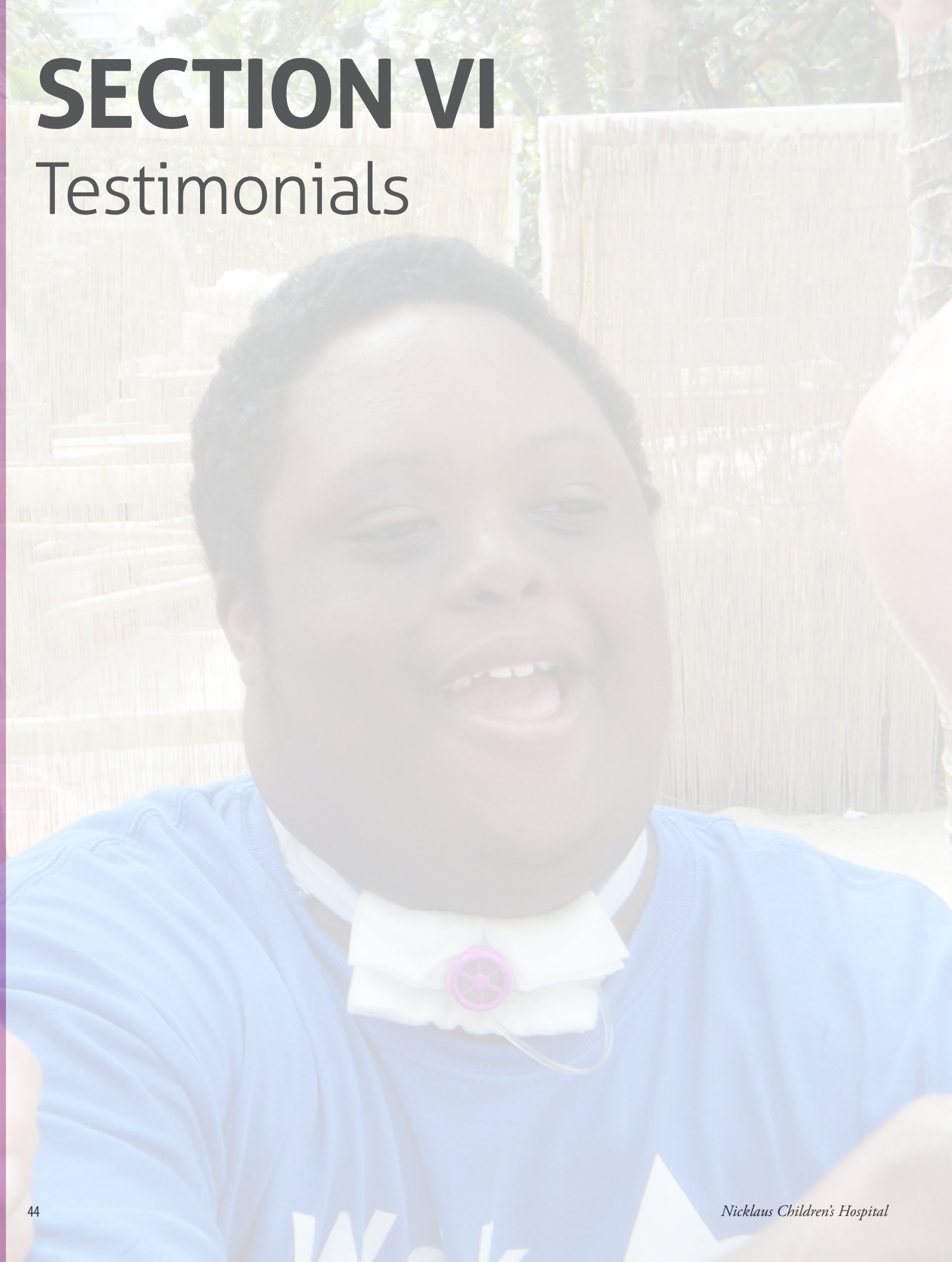
JAH-NETS Jamaican Cuisine
Javier Talamo
Joe DiSantis, RN
John Lynch (Dr. Pescado)
John Rogers
Jorge Sanabria- Miami beach Firefighters
Juan Carlos Rabionet
Kare Therapy Center, Inc.
Kenneth Smith - barbeque
Kids 2 Kids, Inc.
K-Mart Store 3074
K-Mart Store 9324
L & M Engraving and Trophy, Inc
Lee & Marie’s Cakery Company
Lenin & Daughter Home Services
Lisa Spangler-Western Dancer
Logistics Outsourcing
Mama Jennie’s Italian Restaurant
Manolin & Pilar, Inc.
Mark McCarthy - McCarthy Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc.
Mascots – Marlins
McDonalds 4534
Medical Care Transport
Miami-Dade Ambulance Service
Miami-Dade County Public Schools Transportation
Miami Impressions
Miami Promotions - Michael Porter
Michael Carlebach
Midnight Sound, Inc.
Monica Stouffer- Lisa’s nurse
Ms. Prissy the Clown
Nancy K. Photographer

Neal Hecker
Neon Tiki Tribe
Noelia Beno
North Miami Senior High Football Team
Oskky’s Catering, Inc. – Oscar Carcano
Pedi Stat
Penrods
Poe’s Rentals Alan
Publix Supermarkets Miami Division
Puritan
Renaissance Ballroom
Rumor’s a Neighborhood Bistro
Sign America
Southern Audio Visual
Standardbred Horsewomen of Florida
Standing Room Only Productions, Inc.
Susan Yaskin Braddock FHA club
Taco Bell store 4387 - Jimmy Farrell
Taco Bell store 4488 - Jimmy Farrell
Teresa Swerglof “Chit Chat The Clown”
Tropicaire Publix Store #044
UM- football players and mascots
Valerie and Thomas Jornlid - The Little Farm
Victor “DJ” Keros Quiros
Viviana Vieta
Walgreens Advance Care
Winn-Dixie
Woody’s Barbeque

Over the years there may have been many more special volunteers, sponsors and donors that may not be mentioned in the list above. We apologize for any omission and we thank you and appreciate your support.

SECTION VI

Testimonials



Camper Families

Westendorp
5020 Indianola Ave.
Edina, MN 55424

VACC Camp
Bella, Laura, Rose Ann,
Dr. Simpser, Noel, and all Staff,
Contributors, and Volunteers
Miami Children's Hospital
3200 SW 60 Court
Suite 203
Miami, Florida 33155-4076

May 7, 1999

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for the absolutely wonderful week we had at VACC Camp in Miami last month! Aaron still can't stop talking about the fun events you planned and all of the people at camp who worked so hard to make it happen.

It is amazing to us that people would be dedicated enough to do a project so large in scope even once, and unbelievable that you have done it *twelve years in a row!* We have often fought for support services so we can care for Aaron at home, where he has always been a thriving member of our family. Experiencing the VACC Camp staff, volunteers, and other families' enthusiasm, given so openly and freely, did our hearts good—we felt that Aaron was not only accepted, but embraced as a vital member of a loving community.

We will always treasure our memories of each of you and the extraordinary ways in which you shared yourselves with us during that fantastic week. Please use the enclosed copies of our scrapbook pages in any way you wish. God bless each of you in all you do!

With heartfelt thanks,

Doug

Krista

Jessica

Aaron

the Westendorps

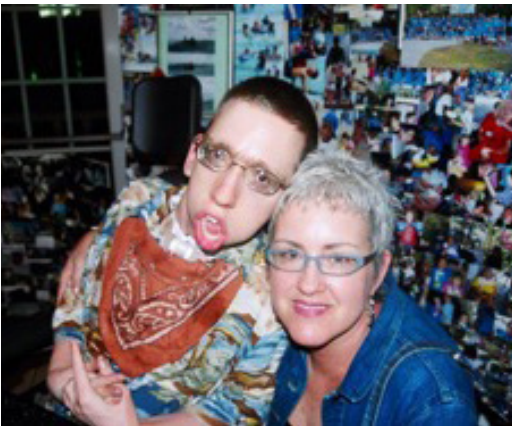
[Handwritten signatures: Doug, Krista Westendorp, Jessica, Aaron]



Aaron with parents Krista and Doug and sister Jessica sailing at Shake-a-Leg



Aaron with volunteer Christina Beno and a therapy dog



Aaron and his mother Krista at the VACC Camp's 20th anniversary celebration

Nuestra Familia apreciamos mucho la oportunidad que nos han dado en participar en este campamento, la labor dirigida por Dr. Simpser y todo su Staff de trabajo, voluntarios y su gran labor Sra.Bela Florentin, por esta gran oportunidad de darnos a conocer e integrarnos a esa gran comunidad de familias que al igual que nosotros compartimos las mismas necesidades especiales por nuestros hijos. Gracias por abrirnos a ese mundo de nuevas experiencias y posibilidades que se nos ofrecen a traves del VACC-CAMP. Dios bendiga esta labor que alienta a muchas familias a seguir a traves de las adversidades y debemos levantarnos y mirar hacia adelante ya que existen un sin numero de posibilidades para alcanzar el exito con nuestros hijos y vivir nuevas experiencias y sobre todo saber que no estamos solos. Gracias VACC-CAMP, Dios siga bendiciendoles por tan importante y preciada labor.

Familia Miranda, somos bendecidos por tener con nosotros a nuestro adorado hijo Adam Javier Miranda.

Our family appreciates very much the opportunity to participate in VACC Camp, the work directed by Dr. Simpser and all his staff and volunteers and for your great labor Mrs. Bela Florentin. We appreciate the opportunity to get to know and become part of a large community of families that all share similar special needs due to our medically complex children. Thank you for introducing us to the world of new experiences and possibilities that are offered to us through VACC Camp. God bless this labor that inspires many families to continue through all the adversities, to get up and look ahead because there are numerous possibilities to reach success for our children and live new experiences, especially knowing that we are not alone. Thank you VACC Camp, May God continue blessing you for such an important and priceless labor.

The Miranda family. We are blessed to have with us our son Adam Javier Miranda.



Adam during carnival



Adam with his mother Maria and the dog Alfie during therapy dogs



Adam and his mother Maria at Bird Bowl



Adam dancing with Rose Ann Farrell and Dr. Moises Simpser at Hard Rock Cafe



Adam with his parents Maria Tijerino and Erwing Miranda



Maria Tijerino, Adam and volunteer Stephanie Sydnor

How VACC Camp Changed Our Lives:

Once again, the good Doctor presents us with a challenge that seemed impossible! Dr. Simpson and his beautiful Camp showed us that even after one of life's darkest tragedies, you can smile again, make friends once again and relearn how to do some of the fun things we used to do. VACC Camp also taught us how to face our fears, try something new and how to feel normal again. And by 'normal' I mean, feeling like we belonged somewhere, and that somewhere allows our extended family to belong too. Thanks to VACC Camp, Amanda has made friendships that continue to grow stronger year after year. My favorite memory for my daughter was the opportunity of being asked and going to Prom. VACC Camp gave us back this precious, coming of age celebration, as well as many others. Simply, what VACC Camp has done for our entire family, is to help us heal, face our fears, and find joy in life again.

With love and thanks,
The Dinnigan Family



Robert (Bob) Dinnigan (father), Thomas Walcutt (uncle), Arlene Dinnigan (mother), Spencer Walcutt (cousin), Amanda, Lorraine Moran (grandmother), Michael Moran (grandfather), Jane Walcutt (cousin), Pamela Walcutt (aunt)



Amanda with volunteer Santiago Cortes



Amanda with her father Bob, volunteer Anthony Camejo and respiratory therapist Osvaldo Fernandez



Amanda with volunteer Amanda Manzano and nurse Paul at VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration

VACC camp for my child was a life within her life! Her typical, everyday life had limits and plenty of things she simply could not do. VACC camp opened up her world to things she COULD do. Amy had always been a happy girl, loving life in spite of the disabilities she faced every day, but once she got to VACC camp, her world opened up! Suddenly things that seemed impossible before were now real! The greatest of these things was love! In our typical everyday life, the thought of Amy falling in love and having a boy just never entered our minds. Yes she was a little flirty girl, but we never really thought much of that. At VACC camp she found her love! While a typical relationship was out of the question for our girl, here she found a love that was amazing! She found a young man who showed her so much respect and so much dignity. For her, this was a very real love and for him, it was a love he could share with her. For us, it was a safe love with a young man that we love and treasure to this day! We learned many things at VACC camp; we learned she COULD go swimming, even in the ocean, much to Mom's dismay! We learned that she loved water fights! We learned that she could dance, even in a wheelchair. We learned that she loved being on the ocean in a boat, and would kiss the Captain for another ride! We learned that all of these things that we never did, made our girl so very happy! We learned that it was okay to step away, to go mingle with other families; that she could have a life all on her own. We learned to let go just a little and let her live that life. Most of all we learned to let others love her; and love her they did!

Rhonda Bradley for Amy Clevenger



Amy with her preferred plush toy



Amy, her mom Rhonda Bradley, Island cruise workers and MCH plant operations Luis Calvino



Amy Clevenger her parents Rhonda and Jim Bradley and her sister Makayla



Amy with her mother Rhonda at Prom night



The Bradley's with their little daughter at VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration.

Andrea Patrick
Camper 2013 to present

VACC Camp means a lot to me because I have met really great volunteers, team leaders and staff. I tried every activity and never backed out of it. I get to have 2 spring breaks just so I get to go to VACC Camp in the nice Miami weather. This is my 5th year going to VACC Camp and won't stop going until I am a VACC Camp graduate. I can't wait until VACC Camp 2017.

The first picture is of my first year of VACC Camp. Alejandra Chinaea was one of my volunteers. She was holding me in the pool in the photo to the left. My second photo is with Andreina Chinaea, we took a picture on the first day at the carnival. I was so honored to have Alejandra's sister last year and we had so much fun together. I hope I have Andreina again this upcoming spring because we love each other so much. VACC Camp will always be a family camp where volunteers and their family members come and join camp too.
Andrea Patrick



Andrea with volunteer Alejandra Chinaea



Andrea with volunteer Andreina Chinaea



Volunteer Sarah Pastoriza, DO with Angela Antonick (Andrea's aunt), Nadine Patrick (Andrea's mother), Andrea and her nurse Laura Keverline



Volunteer Andreina Chinaea with camper Andrea and Andrea's mother Nadine



Andrea and her mother Nadine at Western event



Andrea and her mom Nadine with firefighters at Nikki Beach

Para Andrew Nagle y nuestra familia el vacccamp es una bendición y estamos muy agradecidos con Dios; El Dr. Simpser y todos los que lo hacen posible. Este campamento le ha ayudado a Andrew a ser mas extrovertido; y como familia a compartir y ver que hay otras personas que nos apoyan y se interesan por hacernos mas llevadera aqui en la tierra esta mission que Dios nos encomendo. P.S: todos los dias pregunta cuando empieza el campamento y quiere ponerse la camiseta.

Muchas gracias y bendiciones.

Paola Nagle for Andrew Nagle

For Andrew Nagle and our family the VACC Camp is a blessing and we are very grateful with God, Dr. Simpser and everyone that makes it possible. This camp has helped Andrew to be more extroverted, and as a family to share and see that there are other people that offer us support and aim to make more bearable the mission on earth that God has given us. Every day he asks when is camp and wants to wear his camp T-shirt.

Thank you and blessings.



Andrew with his mother Paola, his sister Isabella and volunteer Vanessa Barquin



Andrew with Mark McCarthy at the wildlife show



Andrew with his mother Paola, his sister Isabella and volunteer Vanessa Barquin



Andrew in Nikki Beach



Andrew and his sister at Retro Party



Andrew in 2017



Andrew with his mom Paola, his sister Isabella and his stepdad Roberto Rios

Annelise Trapp
Camper 2003-2013, 2016

The excitement for my daughter Annelise upon the approach of the first day of VACC camp each year cannot be described. A combination of Christmas, her birthday and all other holidays could not come close to her happiness in anticipation of spending time with old friends and making new acquaintances. In the 10 years that we attended VACC camp we made many lifelong friends that have enriched our lives in many ways. Thank you Dr. Simpser and your entire staff for your dedication to making this week every year so fantastic for all the special needs families lucky enough to attend.

Charles Trapp

For me VACC Camp has made a huge change in mine and my family’s lives. The way it has made a huge change in my life is by meeting people with ventilators and some of the people have the same disability as me if not close.

Annelise Trapp



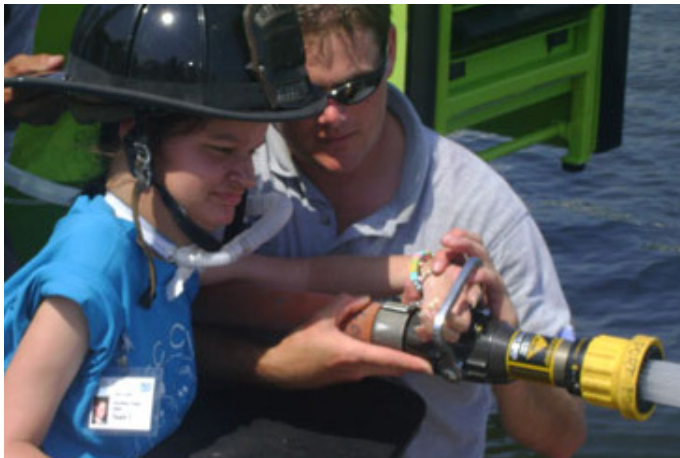
Charles Trapp (father), Annelise and her brother Alec Trapp



Volunteer Marta Cuervo Pareck with Annelise and volunteer Zachyra Appleby



Annelise & Dr. Simpser in the pool



Annelise with firefighter



Annelise

A poem written by Mrs. Elizabeth Platter, mother of one of VACC Camp’s first campers Anthony Platter. She read it at the 30th anniversary celebration.

Our Very Dear Dr. Simpson

Your heart is and always was deeply in touch
with suffering children,
unable to breath on their own, unable to walk-
day by day with their family live in constant fear,
alienated life- just to survive.
So, You invite the lucky chosen
to one week in paradise-
flying with angels, feeling free,
got sense of normal life in atmosphere of love,
that enables the children to swim with the holes in their throats.
It is a miracle inspired by love.

God Bless You Dr. Simpson
Yours always Anthony Plater-Zyberk with family



Anthony at camp



Anthony with Buster the Clown



Anthony at the Parrot Jungle



Anthony with Noelia Beno, RT at the 20th anniversary celebration



Anthony with Dr. Moises Simpson at the 20th anniversary celebration



Anthony and his mother Elizabeth at our 30th anniversary celebration

I remember the first time we were asked to attend VACC Camp, we were a little reluctant because we have never gone out of the house before unless it was for appointments. We always remained sheltered because there was no programs or things to do for trach dependent children. We decided to go just to check it out and it is a decision we will never regret. VACC Camp changed our lives in so many ways. We met families that where like us which was an amazing experience. VACC Camp took us in the pool, took us on boats, we went sailing, went to the beach, went bowling and at the camp we had family nights and did activities with the children but the most amazing experience about VACC Camp was the way Dr. Simpson loves his kids, he always goes above and beyond to make each child feel special and let them know that they are not alone. His love gives the children hope and lets them share in moments that without him where impossible. The staff and volunteers of VACC Camp where exceptional. We are forever grateful for the moments we shared at VACC Camp and hope more families get to experience the same.

Love always,
The Payne Family



Ayshia Payne with mom Ann Costales, dad Warren Payne, brother Rodney and sister Shayna in a cruise



Ayshia drumming at music therapy



Ayshia with volunteer Jacqueline Cabrera



Ayshia with her parents and brother at the 30th anniversary celebration

A short paragraph couldn't possibly describe the memories we have. Spring Break meant a week of fun and a lot of laughs. Getting to do things normally physically impossible. Cake baking, throwing pies and water balloons at the doctor's faces, meeting new friends year after year. Watching parents of these very special kids making complete fools of themselves. Dancing on table tops at Hard Rock, pole dancing on the catamaran cruise. A true treasure of memories never to be forgotten. All about the kids. ☺

Sheri Atwood (mother of Brett Atwood)



Brett and mom Sheri at camp during carnival



Brett boarding cruise at Bayside



Brett and Mom Sheri in 2016 at a western event in 2016



Brett with volunteers Tatiana Vidales, Carmen Prieto and Jessica Rivero



Brett in 2016 participating in sport events



VACC Camp, has open doors for Brianna that no one ever has been able to open, except for God. You guys have given us hope, inspiration, and life all at the same time. When everyone else, said “she wouldn’t be able to do it”, you guys told me “yes, she can”. We are forever grateful and cannot forget your hard work and dedication. As a special needs parent, words cannot express our gratitude towards you all. May God Almighty continue to bless you all!

With love and gratitude,

Brianna & Family



Briana during carnival day at camp 2012



Brianna with mother Joanne, father Jerome and sister Tianna



Briana in the pool with her mother

From the first day of attending VACC camp it was more than I ever expected it to be. I have made so many amazing friends, and done things that I thought would never be possible having a trach. One of the most major things that had an impact on my life is that I gained my confidence to go into the pool again. They gave me a cap to put on my trach and I was able to put my whole body in the pool where before I would only go in to about waist deep water. Swimming was something I did quite often before I was trached so this really changed me. I was finally able to shower in a “normal” way instead of 3 people having to help. Camp is just an amazing place where I met some incredible people that I will forever be friends with. Camp truly was there for me when I needed it the most. I love VACC CAMP!

Brittnay Dupont



Volunteer Jennifer Ramos and Brittnay in the pool



Brittnay and her service dog



Volunteers Jennifer Ramos and Alexandra Lopez with Brittnay



Brittnay, her cousin, and a Group of volunteers



Brittnay, her mom Robin and her fiancé Wesley Keller at the 30th anniversary



Brittnay and Wesley Keller

What VACC Camp Means To Me

If I had to describe VACC camp in just a few words it would be “life changing experience”. I struggled with MD from the age of 3, then life as I knew it, would change when at 7 years old a stroke ripped out what little abilities I had left in me. I became ventilator dependent and could no longer do many of the things that I enjoyed. Then in 1999, my family discovered VACC Camp, so we set out on an adventure from the hills of West Virginia to Miami. Little did we know that our first trip to Florida would change our lives forever.

This camp introduced me and my family to so many others that shared our struggles and for the first time I wasn’t surrounded by people who stared at me because they were all just like me. Our entire families rocked the Hard Rock Café as we formed friendships that would last a lifetime. Dr. Simpson and the staff at VACC Camp made it possible for me to do many of the things other professionals said I could never do. I loved to swim and they gave my family the knowledge and tools to make this activity possible for me again. Even being vent dependent I can now swim and I have since even swam with dolphins.

They made me and my family realize, for me there are NO LIMITS. During camp I rode a sail boat, and it was amazing. Granted many of the activities that I do take a little more time and effort but it can be done. The staff at VACC camp makes each camper and their families feel special. While I am at camp I forget that I have a disability, because they remind the campers that we are all the same, we are all special and we are all here for the same reason to have fun and learn to live life to its fullest. I am so thankful for this camp and the staff they have given me and my family a true “life changing experience”.

Cassandra (Cassy) Bays and Family



Cassandra with mother Twylla, sister Kaylla and father Cameron



Cassandra throwing pie at Dr. Simpson during carnival



Cassandra with volunteer Stephan Mercado



Cassy and her parents

I learned about VACC Camp from the organization that handles my daughter's advocacy. From that moment, I felt it would be a great experience for Chelsea. I had no idea that it would be the experience that it came to be for my entire family. From the time that we arrived at the airport and were transported to the camp, we were greeted with such love and comfort. This being our first adventure of this magnitude, we really did not know what to expect. Chelsea was no longer the odd person out but she was made to feel like a princess! Her first camp buddies assigned to her did not shy away from the fact that her care was extensive, but they were willing to help in every way they could to make Chelsea's first time a memorable experience. Chelsea's underlying diagnosis of SMA Type 1 had taken away her ability to do anything for herself and she had never been swimming before because of her tracheotomy tube. I was a nervous wreck. Dr. Simpser knew my concern and assured me he was not going to let anything happen to her. Chelsea was more than willing to try. With a small group of about 4-5 people which included 2 to support her, one to bag her and one to hold the oxygen tank, they accomplished what others were afraid to attempt. The feeling for Chelsea was so liberating. She did not want to come out of the pool. She spent almost 2 hours floating around in the cool blue water. It became her camp highlight and what she looked forward to each time we came back.

For my son, Carleton, the highlights were the friends he made. He said "I never would have thought that there were other kids like me who understood the pressures of having a sibling like mine. I felt like I belonged just like Chelsea did. Sometimes we don't get the attention we crave because our siblings need so much but at VACC I was never alone". For me as a mother it was the joy of knowing I could bring them to this camp as a family and encounter the same things together that other trips don't allow for. For me the smiles were priceless. We have made lifelong friendships that will forever be remembered. Happy 30th Anniversary VACC Camp. Dr. Simpser and staff, you guys are amazing. You are a blessing to many. May God continue to bless you with the desires of your heart.

Thank you from The Kings
 Natalie, Carleton and Chelsea



Chelsea in 2000



Chelsea with volunteer Carmen Prieto



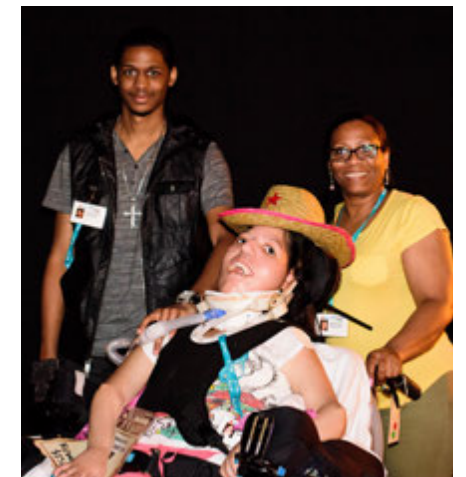
Chelsea in the pool, her mother watching and Dr. Simpser, Javier and Laura Hernandez with her.



Javier Hernandez ambu- bagging Chelsea at Nikki beach



Chelsea leaving the cruise with volunteer Alexander Maturell



Chelsea, her mother Natalie and her brother Carleton at a western event



Chelsea with nurse Monica Stouffer at the 20th anniversary celebration



Chelsea, her mother Natalie and her brother Carleton at VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration

VACC Camp to us is dedicated family time where Cheyenne gets to make the rules, she is not singled out, as every activity is focused on her “abilities” and not her “disabilities.” VACC camp has given our family the opportunity to experience life in Cheyenne’s eyes.

Luz Oquendo (mother of Cheyenne Crump)



Cheyenne and her brother Keyan



Cheyenne with Mark McCarthy during Wildlife show



Cheyenne with volunteers Maya Lowe and Amy Meltzer



Cheyenne and her parents Luz and Herb and brother Keyan



Cheyenne and her parents Luz and Herb and brother Keyan at the 30th anniversary celebration

Chris Mercado
Camper 1995, 1997, 2001-2002, 2004-2010

The Mercado family first attended camp when Chris was 10 years old. His siblings were 4 and 6. It had been two years prior that our world shrank with Chris being trached, on a vent at night and tube fed. VACC CAMP opened so many doors. Chris was reintroduced to swimming pools and beaches--something that is unheard of with trached kids. He sailed and got on other boats. The Mercado family had a sense of normalcy again, where the kids met peers that had a sibling with special needs. A week of no stares, no judgments, full of smiles, laughter, sharing stories. Everyone shared ideas and gave support to one another. A week that reassured us parents that, YES, we can do this and we are not alone. We learned how to be better advocates for our children. A common theme in the young lives that are impacted by spending one week with special needs children is finding purpose and pursuing a health care career. I am proud to call my youngest son, Doctor. He graduated last May from the Doctoral Physical Therapy program. Not only was he a sibling of someone with special needs but he served as a volunteer for several years. We have long life friends that were campers, parents, staff and/or volunteers. They have become family. The love and support that we received when Chris passed 5 years ago is immeasurable. I thank God for the love and support of my VACC CAMP family. We continue to stay in touch and we will always be 'forever family'!

Maria Rivera (mother of Chris Mercado)



Chris at the camp pool with his mother Maria



Chris and his mom Maria at a farewell Piñata



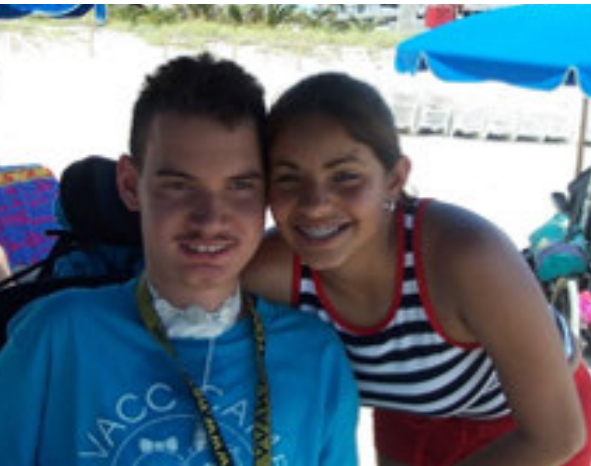
Chris in Nikki Beach with parents David and Maria



Chris at camp carnival with volunteer Carmen Prieto



Chris with his mother Maria, brother Stephan and nurse Diane at the 20th anniversary celebration



Chris (RIP) with volunteer Janell Vazquez



Shara Waas, David Mercado, Carmen Prieto, Maria Rivera, Carol Montiel and Stephan Mercado at the 30th anniversary celebration

To many people VACC Camp is just a camp but to me it's more than that. It is a place that I will never forget; from day one it has had a special place in my heart. This is the place I consider my second home. VACC Camp has taught me so many things such as how to trust other people, to never give up, and that every dream can be accomplished with a positive attitude. This special place has helped me realize that I am not alone, that I am not the only one with a trach and a ventilator. VACC Camp has had a great impact in my life because it has helped me grow into the person I am today, and will help keep molding me in the years to come. This place changed my perspective on life and has made me determined to go forward and never look back. I have learned that I don't have to be sad rather I have to do the exact opposite and smile every day of my life. Today I am happy and grateful for the opportunity I have been given to be a part of this beautiful family. I thank you for teaching me that anything is possible because now I live life without limitations. Happy 30th anniversary to my second home VACC CAMP.

Sincerely,
Chris



Chris with his father leovani, his sister Luisa and his grandmother Adiola



Chris with his father leovany in the pool



Chris at the 20th anniversary celebration in 2006



Chris at the 25th anniversary celebration in 2011



Christopher in 2008



Chris with volunteers Maria Rodriguez, Carmen Prieto, his mother Maria, volunteers Ruben Rueda, Jennifer Otero, Gilbert Pareja, Stephan Mercado, Nicholas Prieto and Patricia Marrero at the 30th anniversary celebration in 2016



Chris with volunteer Jessica Cruz



Chris with mother Maria at the 30th anniversary celebration

VACC Camp will always hold a special place in my heart. My family and I learned about VACC camp through Miami Children’s Hospital where a few of my doctors worked. I attended VACC Camp 9 years ago and couldn’t be more grateful that I did! My family and I gained so much knowledge that was very helpful in my healing process and met so many great people. We really appreciate all the wonderful work Dr. Simpser, and the entire VACC Camp family does!

Cooper Grecco



Cooper with Dr. Simpser.
Farewell 2006



Cooper with Tatiana Vidales at
Shake a Leg



Cooper and Tatiana Vidales Juarez
at VACC Camp’s 30th anniversary
celebration in 2016

Cory Harrison
Camper since 2002 to 2017

I love VACC CAMP, it has allowed me to be myself and do the things I love to do, such as being with my friends (volunteers) I also enjoy activities such as Bowling, Dancing at Hard Rock, Shopping at Bayside and Partying at the campsite.

The best part is that I've made wonderful friends that visits and hang out with me multiple times a year. In short because of VACC CAMP I have gained wonderful great friends.



Cory with Laura Hernandez, ARNP, Javier Hernandez, RRT, his mother Nadine Harrison, volunteer Jessica Rivero and Dr. Simpser



Cory with one of the Neon Tiki Tribe



Cory and volunteer Carmen Prieto



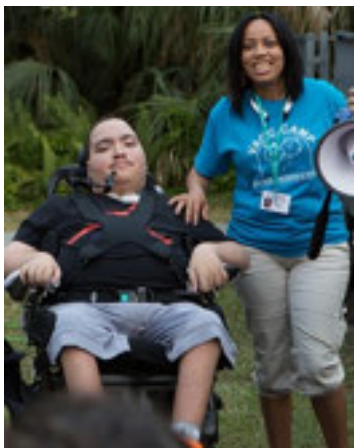
Cory in 2008 at camp.



Cory with Kevin Maestre at Hard Rock Cafe



*Cory with volunteers Amar Mohabir, Karen Cabezas, Kevin Maestre and Larry Plaza
Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp*



Cory and his mother Nadine



Cory with Mother Nadine, Nurse Paule Benoit Debrosse, Patricia Marrero and Carmen Prieto

Dylan Picariello
Camper 2002-2003, 2005-2010, 2016

Our family was blessed to experience our 1st year at VACC Camp shortly after Dylan was put on a ventilator. VACC Camp taught us that being on a vent doesn't mean you're are a prisoner in your home, life goes on. The love, support and advice we received from the other VACC families is unmeasurable. The icing on the cake is the dedicated staff and exceptional volunteers. Our family's life is far superior because of years that we attended VACC Camp. Thank you Dr. Simpser.

Sharon Picariello (mother of Dylan Picariello)



Dylan with Mom Sharon Todd



Dylan with volunteer Ralph Padierne



Dylan at wildlife animal show



Dylan with mom, Grandma Barbara and Cooper



Dylan with volunteers Eliana Lyne, Carmen Prieto and Ralph Padierne



Dylan, Mom Sharon, brother Cooper, grandma Barbara



Dylan, Mom and grandma with Dr. Simpser

THE HOLLISTER/WILLIAMS FAMILY
AND VACC CAMP

When Earl, Ken and I talked about our experiences at VACC camp the first thing Earl said was that the best part of it was the people! He met and got to know so many wonderful individuals! Ken and I did too! Camp gave us the opportunity to offer Earl a camp experience which we had about given up on as a possibility. He was able to have the camp experience and because we, his parents, were able to go along he wasn't left with the feeling that we were just sending him off to face a new experience by himself. We were there as the familiar and the base but because all of the staff members were helpful, friendly, supportive and very interactive with Earl he was able to venture out and have independent interactions with peers in a fantastic environment! Another big plus was the great variety of activities! In other words – there was something for everyone. If a camper like Earl sometimes chose chatting with his new friends over an activity that was okay too. We don't think there could have been a better experience for persons with the unique needs of a respiratory involved individual!

THANKS, EVERYONE!
Earl Hollister



Earl at wildlife show



Earl with parents Corki and Ken Williams and volunteer Vanessa Gonzalez-Retes



Earl with parents Ken and Corki Williams at VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration



Earl with parents Ken and Corki Williams at a Western event at camp

VACC camp rocks!....literally...from the moment you step off the bus...let the games begin! Being first time campers last year, I must say I was a little leery about the whole thing.... flying in from Rhode Island....without the safety of home. We were wondering, "how are they going to organize activities with this many medically fragile children?"...Well.... the staff showed us how!!..VACC camp is a well-oiled machine that provided a week of FUN in a place where families feel safe. It is a place where you can allow your kids to experience some independence with all of the well trained staff... and parents can sit back and exchange stories with other families that completely understand what you go through on a day to day basis. No one feels "different"....it is a place where everyone is completely accepted.

My daughter Ellary has always expressed that she would love to go underwater. In our wildest dreams, we never thought that would be a possibility....until we got to VACC camp. Kids with traches and vents were going underwater left and right! Ellary's eyes lit up! Even though she did not go under....she plans to do it this year! VACC camp is a place where things you never thought possible...actually happen! They make dreams come true!!

Dr. Simpser is a person with a vision....one who truly wants our kids to feel like everyone else and have an experience like any typical child at camp.....his enthusiasm is contagious....we love that man and his vision!! A heartfelt thanks to all those involved in making this happen every year. It means the world to us! It brings tears to my eyes writing this. Even though we were rookies last year, watch out!!!....we look forward to attending VACC camp in the years to come and making new memories that will last a lifetime!! On that note...Dr. Simpser clap, clap...clap, clap, clap!

Cindy Kinnane (mother of Ellary Kinnane)



Ellary receiving her yearly group photo from our child life specialist Brittany Brown



Ellary with Mark McCarthy at the wildlife show



Ellary with parents Cindy and Craig and sister Rylan



Ellary and her father Craig in the pool



The Kinane family at VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration with volunteers



Ellary in the swing at camp with her dad

I'm speaking on behalf of my son Elliot, since he is unable to express himself in words written or verbal. Imagine what that means. What if in an instant without warning you were unable to communicate and your body no longer functioned the way it is supposed to. Yet you're still on this earth plane. You know what's going on around you. Your mind still has the ability to comprehend emotions such as love, happiness and fear, but are unable to express those emotions. Imagine a life where you seldom leave the house. Your friends have long stopped coming to see you because you can't talk, move or express yourself. Imagine the despair, and loneliness you would feel. For one week every spring there is a special place to forget about this prison, to be accepted and not looked upon as strange or some alien looking creature. It's a place where joy reigns and happiness is priority. Where smiles are contagious and fun is a way of life. A place where the sun always shines and the games never end. A place where lifelong friendships are formed, and there is no shortage of inspiration.

You might think this place doesn't exist, it's a fantasyland from a bygone era before the Internet and cell phones. This place does exist, it's called VACC Camp. My son was invited to go to Miami for ten years. We live in Chicago, so it's quite the challenge to get a quadriplegic on a ventilator there. Let me tell you it's all worth it just to see him smile. You don't need language to see elation, it's self-explanatory. VACC Camp is one of those phenomenon I would hope lasts for generations to come.

Mario Ortegon (on behalf of Elliot Ortegon)



Elliot at wildlife show



Elliot and Parents Judy and Mario in the pool



Elliot with volunteer Janell Vazquez



Elliot with parents Judy Santiago and Mario Ortegon at Luau event



Elliot with Child life specialist Lauren Sparkman-Hamed and camper Brett Atwood. Camper Cory Harrison and his dad in the back



Elliot with mother Judy and volunteer Amar Mohabir



Elliot with his father and Marvin Deleon at the VACC Camp 30th anniversary party



Elliot with his parents at the VACC Camp 30th anniversary party

We were so excited to be a part of VACC Camp this year! It was our first time and although we had friends that had attended in the past and told us about it, no amount of information could have prepared us for the experience of a lifetime that we were about to have! VACC Camp 30th Anniversary will forever be a part of our families' fondest memories! I don't know if there are words to describe the outpouring of love that was shown to Gavin and our entire family and what it meant to us! We were so blessed to be a part of this never ending celebration of these medically fragile children who were Rockstars for a week! VACC Camp is the place where you are the cool kid if you have a trach or a vent! It was so overwhelming to see my husband getting all teary eyed watching Gavin at the Hard Rock dancing in the middle of the dance floor surrounded by other friends in powerchairs! For a brief moment in time, our Gavin was the star of the show and he loved it! We are forever thankful for this once in a lifetime experience that we will hold so close to our hearts! Thank you to Dr. Simpser for being so caring and thoughtful to create this camp experience that so many of these kids would never have had! We are also so thankful for Bela and Roseanne who keep the camp so well organized and all of the activities pulled off without a hitch! And of course, we were so impressed and thankful for the teenagers who volunteered their spring break to spend it with our kids! They were some of the most thoughtful and caring individuals around! And of course, it eased our minds and let us relax a bit knowing there were Respiratory Therapists and other medical staff around in a recreational setting who were there to help! We are so thankful to have been a part of this experience! I am sure that we have made friends that will last a lifetime! My 11 year old son said when we were leaving, "Mom when I'm old enough, I want to come back as a volunteer." I said, "Ryan, I'm pretty sure all of the volunteers go to high school in Florida and he replied, that's ok Mom; we will just move."

Ryan & Michelle Croce
Layne, Ryan, Evan & Gavin Croce



Gavin and parents Michelle and Ryan and brothers Evan and Ryan



Gavin playing with Elvis Pala



Gavin dancing at Hard Rock with Diane Morales, CCLS and the Gong sisters



Gavin with his mother in the pool at camp



Gavin with mom, dad, brother, the Gong sisters and Elvis Pala at the 30th anniversary party

Greta had the time of her life at VACC Camp 2015. Thank you for allowing a six year-old and her moms the chance to experience a week of many firsts and incredible independence. Our social butterfly couldn't wait to get out to breakfast with her new volunteer friends and wanted to close down every evening at camp with them. As parents, it was wonderful to be able to relax with our new friends and not have to worry for a second about the care and experiences Greta was enjoying. Everything was seamless -- big trips seem like a piece of cake! We can't imagine what goes into the planning of an experience like this and thank you for inviting us to be part of such a magical week. Our memories will last a lifetime and we look forward to adding on to those memories at future VACC Camps. When Greta was first diagnosed and put on a ventilator, we went through a period of mourning the loss of all of the "normal and ordinary" experiences you hope for as a family. But, once you push all of the expectations for ordinary to the side, you open the space for extraordinary things and that is what VACC Camp brought to us.

The Baier family



Greta with her moms, Lynn and Kate



Greta with her moms, Lynn and Kate



Greta with her moms, Lynn and Kate at the 30th anniversary celebration



Greta with camper Ellary Kinane and her sister Riley, together with camper Stephanie Cortijo



Greta during carnival

Isaac Ayala
Camper 2008-2011

Recién llegados de Puerto Rico, a una ciudad desconocida, con Isaac dependiente de un ventilador, oxígeno, tubo gástrico, y tráquea; nuestras vidas estaban llenas de inseguridades y frustraciones. El hecho de haber participado en VAAC Camp marco una nueva era para nuestra familia. Encontramos el calor de una familia que comprendía a plenitud lo que conlleva cuidar de una personita tan especial y necesitada. Las experiencias compartidas nos enseñaron que era posible tener una vida lo más próximo a lo normal como fuera permisible. Aprendimos que la vida no se detenía y que podíamos disfrutar bellos momentos familiares llenos de diversión. La acogida que recibimos de parte de todos fue como un hogar lejos del hogar. Es una dicha haber conocido tantas personas tan maravillosas que vivirán por siempre en nuestro corazón. VAAC Camp nos enseñó a divertirnos en grande, pero sobre todo nos dio esperanzas para Isaac y que su vida está llena de posibilidades que no se pueden subestimar. Todo fue posible gracias a un hombre con una visión y una misión que a transcendido las décadas y su legado que continuara transcendiendo los tiempos. Gracias a Dios por el Dr. Simpser y por VAAC Camp.

Isaac Ayala's family

Newly arrived to an unknown city to us, with Isaac dependent on a ventilator, gastric tube and trachea, our lives were filled with insecurities and frustrations. Participating in the VACC Camp was the beginning of a new era for our family. We found a close knit family that fully understood what it is to take care of a needy and very special little boy. The experiences shared taught us that it was possible for our lives to be as "normal" as possible. We learned that life goes on and that we could enjoy as a family precious moments filled with enjoyment. Everyone made camp feel as a home away from home. We are very happy to have met so many marvelous people that will live forever in our hearts. VACC Camp taught us how to really have fun, and above all, it gave us hope for Isaac, that his life is full of possibilities that we could not ignore. Everything was possible thanks to a man with a vision and a mission that has transcended decades and whose legacy will continue transcending the times. Thank God for Dr. Simpser and for VACC Camp.

Isaac Ayala's family



Isaac in 2008



Isaac and family with volunteer Virginia Perello at Nikki Beach



Isaac and his dad at the park pool



Jose Ayala (father), Ricarda Torres (mother), Isaac Ayala Camper and Clara Rosario Ayala (sister).



Isaac in 2016

Jennifer Claire Hart
Camper 1989-1991, 1997-2002

My daughter Jennifer Claire Hart LOVED the VAAC camp! The nine years attending camp brought her a sense of awareness that there was so much more to life besides her disability. She made longtime friends, that loved her sincerely and she loved also. So many fun memories participating in Western night, Shake-a-leg, Parrot Jungle, Bayside, Penrods at the Beach, Boggy Creek, face painting, Carnival night and the list goes on of all the wonderful times planned by our beloved doctor and head of Pulmonology, Dr. Moises Simpser and his phenomenal team. Through all the sad times, God gave us an oasis, a place of respite where we could be just like everyone else this one time a year. I am and will always be thankful to God and Dr. Simpser for the VAAC camp and the devoted volunteers.

Virginia Alfonso (Jennifer’s mother)



Little Jennifer with nurse Joanne



Jennifer with one of camp volunteers



Jennifer at camp



Jennifer with nurse Monica Stouffer



Jennifer with child life specialist Heather Isenhour Silva



Jennifer with her mom Virginia doing tie dye



Jennifer’s Mother and grandmother with Ann Lyons and Frank Hart, Jennifer’s father at the 30th anniversary celebration



Virginia Alfonso, Jennifer’s mother with Ann Lyons at the 30th anniversary celebration

Jennifer Paneque
Camper 1997-2010, 2016

Our daughter, Jennifer Paneque, was a typically developing child until she suffered a brain hemorrhage at the age of two and half, and our lives changed forever. We were blessed, however, to have had the opportunity to meet amazing families along the way. Many of such families we met through VACC Camp, which we participated in for 14 years. It was important for us to share our experiences with other families with chronic lung diseases among other illnesses who could relate. It was a special place where parents, children, and even siblings could learn from each other, have fun, and establish long lasting friendships. VACC Camp was always a special time of the year we all looked forward to in excitement to reunite with newfound friends. Having a special needs child makes it challenging to travel but being at VACC Camp allowed our family to enjoy each activity with minimal worry given the amount of support provided by the volunteers. We are forever grateful that we had the opportunity to participate in the camp and know that it is because of the tremendous effort, passion, and dedication given by Dr. Moises Simpser and his staff, volunteers, and donors. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for allowing us to be part of the VACC Camp family.

Jennifer, Anthony, Marianne, Juan and Maria Paneque



Jennifer with her father Juan, mother Maria and her sister Marianne at the 20th anniversary celebration



Jennifer at Nikki Beach



Jennifer with her father Juan, mother Maria, brother Anthony and her sister Marianne



Jennifer dancing with Dr. Simpser



Jennifer with her parents and sister in 2016 Western event



Jennifer with her father Juan, mother Maria, brother Anthony with his wife and Jennifer's sister Marianne at the 30th anniversary celebration

VACC Camp has changed my life by making me enjoy myself with other people who feel the same way as I do. One of the ways that camp has changed my life is meeting new people and going to places that I didn't expect to go or watch a wildlife or dog shows. The beach was super great and an amazing experience because I thought that I would never see myself go in the ocean and, therefore, it was the most exciting thing in my life and meeting the volunteers was an amazing thing too, not only as our new friends, but as our brothers and sisters. The wildlife show was interesting, but in my experience, one of my favorite moments from camp was Hawaiian night because I always feel like I'm in Hawaii. In conclusion, V.A.C.C Camp is an amazing experience that we enjoy.

Jessica Leyva



Jessica during Therapy dogs event



Jessica being taken to swim by the Miami Beach firefighters at Nikki beach, With Dr. Moises Simpser and Osvaldo Fernandez RT



Jessica dancing at Hard Rock café



Jessica, her mother, her sister and her nurse

Joshua Flores
Camper 2006, 2009 to present

For Joshua Flores and family the camp has been an extraordinary experience. In the beginning he was shy and did not want to participate in the different activities. But as the time passed by he got to enjoy them. The experience of getting to know other campers and their families has also been a blessing. Getting to share the happy moments, our challenges, and our victories. Every year Joshua's birthday is celebrated at camp due to the fact that it falls on the same week which he enjoys very much, he also enjoys going to the beach, bayside, bowling and the hard rock café. He has got to know the people and has befriended them and learned to love them and gets very sad when the camp ends.

Joshua Flores



Joshua at Bird Bowl



Joshua with James Santiago London at Bayside



Joshua with volunteers Anaely Torres, Gilbert Pareja and Melina Sadeghi



Joshua as captain from Island Cruise in Bayside



Joshua with his parents Maria Cruz and Adam Flores



Joshua with his parents Maria Cruz and Adam Flores at the 30th anniversary celebration

Justin Cox
Camper 2013 to present

My son first attended camp in 2013 at the age of 4. He was a shy, anti-social little boy. He is now 8 and we are watching him evolve into a typical little boy. One would be surprised of the huge difference a week at this camp has done for him. He experienced many firsts here. His first trip to the beach, his 1st boat ride, his 1st time in a pool, and the lists goes on. These are things he would not have experienced had it not been for VACC Camp. For families like ours that don't get typical vacations, camp has become our family vacation. Disney is not the happiest place on earth, VACC Camp is. We love and appreciate Dr. Mo and his entire team.

Michelle Cox (mother of Justin Cox)



Justin at the Shake-a-leg hangar



Justin and sister Jordyn at camp



Justin with mom Michelle at Hard Rock Cafe



Justin at Bird Bowl



Justin with his parents Michelle and Gary and sister Jordyn at lunch in Shake-a-Leg



Justin with volunteer Catie Schwartzman



Justin with his father Gary at Luau event



Justin with his parents Gary and Michelle, his sister Jordyn and volunteer Catie Schwartzman at the 30th anniversary celebration

Kenneth "K.L." Cleeton
Camper 2000-2001, 2006

VACC Camp was an amazing experience for K.L. and our family. To be surrounded by so many wonderful people who were dedicated to creating an atmosphere of inclusion for all the campers and families was truly a blessing. We will always remember the events, but more importantly we will remember people and how welcoming everyone was at VACC Camp.

K.L. Cleeton
Founder
2Fast4u Productions



K.L. with Sebastian the Ibis, the UM Mascot



K.L. with camper Stephonne Gassant



K.L. with his parents and brother



K.L., his father Ken and volunteer Christina Beno

I want to start by saying thank you. It was such an amazing experience we had at VACC Camp. Everyone was so caring, from the Doctor, staff, to all the wonderful volunteers. You guys made us feel very special. Kenney had a blast. He was so happy to be there. It was the best vacation we ever had. It is very hard to go on vacation with a special needs child because you need so much equipment and they have different needs. But being at VACC Camp was like being at home. Kenney had so much fun every time we went that he never wanted to leave. He cried every single time we left. He loved every one. Thank you so much. God bless you all.

Kenney Roman and Family.



*Kenney with parents Mara and Anibal
and sister Kayla*



Kenney with sister Kayla



Kenney at Nikki Beach

Kenny is a past camper that communicates through a computer and it is difficult for him to express himself. Below is his message for the book.

Years I been VACC camp. I start go VACC camp since I was 12. I met good people over there. VACC camp change my life forever I remember I use to go a lot of trip. Monica is best the nurses in VACC camp she good person. Everybody over there. I didn't know VACC camp was since I start go there. I like people over there.



Kenny at camp



Kenny with a therapy dog



Kenny during Bayside shopping time



Kenny swimming with volunteer James Santiago London



Kenny with nurse Amanda Stewart sailing at Shake-a-Leg



Kenny sailing with Dr. Moises Simpser

On November 26, 1982, my husband and I were blessed with a miracle of life. A precious tiny son entered our world, forever to change our lives and many others as well. While most new moms and dads brought their newborn home to an array of family and friends welcoming with gifts and flowers, our 2 month old newborn came home to a room full of respiratory support equipment, as sophisticated as any intensive care unit. Our visitors were mom, dad, a pediatrician, and a respiratory therapist. Twenty six months later, another miraculous addition arrived into our home. Another tiny, premature life, a precious little girl. Another homecoming with machines and equipment equal to any hospital room. And, again, no guests.

Our daily schedule was twenty-four hours a day of constant life and death battles keeping our children alive. In 1982-1985 there were no resources to tap into. We had no computers, no cell phones and no support groups. We were alone. Then in 1986 I was asked to be chapter director of the State of Florida for an organization then known as SKIP. The acronym stood for Sick Kids Need Involved People. Its purpose was to educate and unite families of chronically ill children with others who had similar disabilities. Thirty years ago I was fortunate to be involved in piloting the very first ever of its kind camp for families of chronically ill children. This camp was designed to bring entire families from across the country to Miami Florida for "the vacations of their lives."

Try to imagine a world of survival, a world of doctor's appointments, treatments, sleepless nights, every night, and minute to minute life and death decisions needing to be made daily, ALONE! Imagine the impact this has on the "healthy" family members. Now, imagine a week away from the nightmare, where you encounter professional assistance day and night, security, but most of all, time to be a family again. You meet others who are dealing with exactly what you deal with every day, willing and wanting to share. Needing to cry, because you truly know why they are crying. Finally, knowing you're not alone. And yes, that there is hope.

That is what VACC Camp (previously SKIP) is all about. It is the beginning of a lifetime of friendships and opportunities to be like any other family. These families and their children are heroes, and so are the people at VACC Camp. Thank you for keeping alive a vision that to this day continues, 30 years of caring and sharing HOPE!

The Gebo family



Kevin at camp 1987



Kevin with his mother Joan, Camper Michelle Demott, Barbara Donaghy, ARNP, Anthony Platter and his mother Elizabeth and Dr. Simpson in 2006



Kevin and his parents at VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration in 2016



Kevin playing the trumpet at the VACC Camp 30th Anniversary celebration in 2016

Landon Jenkins
Camper 2009-2016

The Jenkins family attended camp starting in 2009 and until 2016 as their son graduated from camp due to his age. They became campers as well as benefactors of camp since the beginning. They donated money, donated a wonderful beach chair that has made our beach field trips more enjoyable for all campers and they have also insituted a night event, the last evening of camp, and have done incredible parties that everyone loves. They were instrumental in creating the wonderful atmosphere, décor and entertainment for our 30th anniversary celebration. For several years they provided our campers with a great party and entertainment during the last evening of camp. We thank Torrey, Kathy, Landon our camper, Jordan, Tory and Ty for their generous contributions to camp.



Landon and his father Torrey at Bird Bowl



Landon at camp



Landon with volunteer Elizbeth Simon



Landon and his mother Kathy at Hard Rock Café party



Landon having fun in the Island Queen cruise



Landon with his parents, brother, sisters and nurse at Bird Bowl



Torrey and Kathy with their son Jordan and daughters at the 30th anniversary celebration

We attended our first VACC camp in 1992. That was the first time we had traveled away from home with our 5 year old daughter and also the first time on a plane. Until then, we believed that extended travel with her was virtually impossible. We were unsure what to expect and were pleasantly surprised with the large number of volunteers, including medical professionals. That trip was one of the few that my daughter has had independence. It also opened our eyes to the differing philosophies. Children's in DC was strictly against a child with a trach going near the water and didn't want us anywhere near a beach. When I mentioned that to Dr. Simpser, he laughed and said that they couldn't make those prohibitions in Miami. It was still amazing to watch kids with trachs laugh with glee as they went into the pool, likely for the first time. The success of that trip made it clear to us that we were better off then it seemed to us and that we could travel and do all "normal things" with her. We did not find out until later that our daughter was pictured on the cover of the Sunday magazine which featured a long article on the camp.

Tad Olson, father of Laura Olson



Laura with her father Harding, her mother Doreen and her brother Gregory



Looking from the outside in when attending VACC camp there are so many things that you do not see.....Children and their families who have life threatening illnesses live each and every day wondering if it is their last. They are always different than the rest of the world. They look different than most children, always with medications and life sustaining equipment, something most children never have to contemplate. And for the siblings, the appreciation for life on a daily basis and the knowledge of what a true "emergency" is like, is something no sibling should experience. Taking a real "vacation" or doing activities that for most are routine, is typically a dream that most families with a catastrophic illness never expect to come true. VACC camp provides one week of normalcy in an abnormal world for the child who suffers from life threatening condition, but also for their parent(s) and siblings. VACC camp gives them the opportunity to participate in family centered activities and field trips, in order to have experiences that they otherwise would not have, experiences that the typical family has while on a "regular" vacation. Trips to the beach, to Bayside, to go boating, swimming, etc. are all activities that these families can only dream about without VACC camp's involvement.

Not only it is the activities, but it is the time spent with other families who understand the impact of an illness on the entire family. Most importantly, kids get to be kids. For once in their precious lives, they do not stand out as being strange, they see other children as see themselves, and yes there is the compassion each child has for the other as they must stop their activities in order to take their medication, charge their machines or to have a nurse evaluate them. As a mother of six children, with the sixth child who had a life threatening illness that did in fact take her life, I cannot even begin to tell you the amazing impact that VACC camp had on ALL my children. I do believe that my children who are now successful adults with families of their own, they have a level of compassion for their fellow human beings that they otherwise would not have had if it was not for years of participating in VACC camp. When attending, we were no longer the "strange" family who dealt with issues and emotional pain that only we knew, my children interacted with other children who also had siblings with catastrophic illnesses. They developed long-lasting friendships with these children, they could relate on a level that so few can. In fact my one son married a camp counselor and they had their first child. There are so many miracles and dreams that came true due to Dr. Simpser and the VACC camp staff, truly angels who walk on earth!!!!

Sandra Nanni (mother of Lisa Nanny)



Lisa with her mother Sandra at camp



Lisa with her nurse Monica at camp



Lisa, mom, monica, brother and volunteer Tatiana Pizonero



Lisa with her parents at camp



Lisa Nanni in the pool with her mother Sandra



Lisa's parents, her brother and his wife and baby at our 30th anniversary celebration together with camper Jennifer Hart's family

Although we have only known Dr. Simpser for 2 sessions of VACC camp, it is easy to see how this man has made it his life’s mission. For a man whom I’m certain has an extremely busy career in itself, to pour his heart and soul into making one week such a joy to people with some of life’s greatest challenges is a testimony to his character. He is such a humble man, if you try to compliment him on anything, he immediately diverts the praise to one or all of his team members.

(Not that they don’t deserve it too) I know for us, He is.
The Wibbenmeyer family



Logan with child life specialist
Brittany Brown at Nikki Beach



Logan and parents going
sailing at Shake-a-Leg



Logan and her parents enjoying
Nikki beach



Logan and Terri enjoying wildlife show



Logan with volunteers at Island Queen Cruise



Logan and her parents at the Western event



Logan and her parents at the VACC Camp
30th anniversary celebration

Mariana Acosta Simancas
Camper 2011 to present

“Desde el primer año en el cual Mariana y su familia asistimos al campamento VACC, a dejado no solo una huella imborrable en nuestros corazones, sino que sin ninguna duda puedo decir, que a sido la experiencia más gratificante que todo el grupo familiar a vivido hasta ahora. Experimentar la caridad humana a través del contacto directo con cada una de las actividades recreativas y desde la perspectiva de cada uno de los integrantes del equipo organizador, voluntarios y desde los propios participantes y sus familiares, constituye sin lugar a duda la mejor enseñanza de vida que hemos podido tener hasta hoy. Muchas gracias por este campamento, mi esposo no se equivoca al decir: son los Ángeles de América”

Since the first year that our family attended VACC Camp, it has not only left lasting footprints in our hearts but, without a doubt I can say that it has been the most gratifying experience that our whole family has lived through until now. To experience human warmth through direct contact with all the recreational activities and with the contributions of each one of the organizers, the volunteers and the campers and their families has been without a doubt the best life lessons that we could have had until today. Thank you for VACC Camp; my husband is not wrong when he says: “you are America’s Angels”

Morella Simancas (mother of Mariana Acosta Simancas)



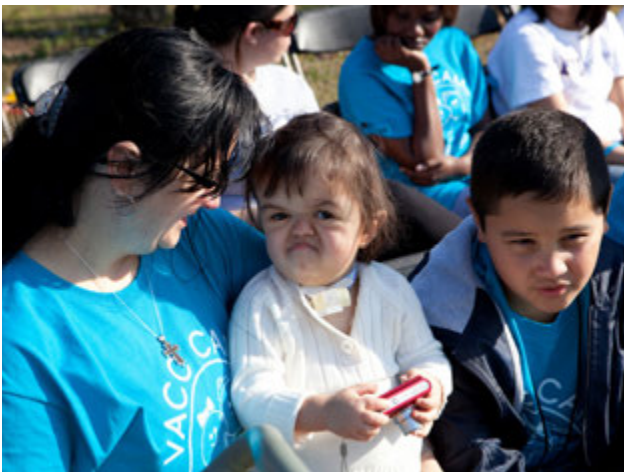
Mariana Acosta Simancas with Staff Operations Alyssa Garcia,



Camper Mariana Acosta Simancas with Staff operations Anthony Camejo



Mariana with Dr. Simpson at Nikki beach



Mariana with mom Morella and her brother Armando Jr.



Mariana with Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, ARNP at Island Queen Cruise



Mariana’s grandmother Alba Virila, Mariana, Armando Acosta Jr(brother), Armando Acosta (father) and Morella Simancas (mother)



Mariana and her family with volunteers Christian Chang, Jackie Garcia, Alyssa Garcia, Carolina Ramirez, Child life specialist Diane Morales, and Mariajose Salamanca at the 30th anniversary celebration

Mateo Gonzalez
Camper 2013-present

We are a family of five; dad, mom, grandmother, little girl and a little boy. After my son was diagnosed with a very rare syndrome, we thought that things will never be the same. Really bad days passed, many days at the hospital, no school, no friends, and life turned a little bit sad; until one day, we came back to live in Miami and got invited to VACC Camp. Oh God; finally, we were part of something; other families just like mine. Even though all the kids have different diagnoses, all of them share the same feelings; life is priceless and no matter how hard things could be; there is always hope. VACC Camp is the best time of the year for our whole family. We appreciate every single thing that Dr. Simpser and his team have done to keep all this big family together. We are so proud of being part of it. Now, we have good friends and more than friends we have an extended family. That is what VACC Camp means: Family and friendship.

Gonzalez Family - Mateo Gonzalez



Mateo and his mother Sheila at farewell



Mateo with Shara Waas and her beautiful Therapy dog Alfie



Mateo with mom Sheila at Shake-a-Leg



Mateo at the wildlife show



Mateo with his friends campers Mariana Acosta and Jessica Leyva at Bird Bowl



Mateo and mom Sheila with Nadine Harrison at VACC Camp fundraising brunch



Mateo at Shake-a-Leg

We hear it all the time. Scientists endlessly speculate about the mysteries of our universe. But while we aim to grasp the puzzling concepts of outer space, little do we know that two separate universes exist right here. And oftentimes, they never overlap. The world continually spins, and these two entities hardly ever meet. However, during this one, phenomenal, awe-inspiring week, the two worlds intertwine; and that, is what I call VACC Camp. My family and I have experienced the blessing of partaking in this week where suddenly, I need not feel foreign because of my physical differences. I need not feel misplaced or strange, but rather right where I belong. Sometimes we live life without knowing how the other exists, without ever putting ourselves in their shoes and experiencing what it's like. Sometimes we never know each other's struggles, feelings, or triumphs. At VACC Camp, two very different functioning worlds come together, and accept themselves as they are. VACC Camp has forever taught me not to feel like an extraterrestrial from far away, but rather a shining star among a beautiful constellation. That is the transcendent beauty of VACC camp.

Maylan Chavez



Maylan at wildlife show



Maylan and her mother Ana Belquis



Maylan and her parents with volunteer Jessica Riverro



Maylan with Dr. Simpser



Maylan at petting zoo



Maylan sailing with Carmen Prieto



Maylan with volunteer Stephan Mercado



Maylan with volunteers Patricia Delguys, Christina Perez, Ricky Martinez and nurse Yulia Llanes at VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration

I have to say as a first-time family we were definitely not sure what to expect and after the first full day there was a little bit of concern that perhaps we had bitten off a bit more than we could handle. After all, we are adults that have never had much support or assistance and we aren't exactly good at asking for help either. This all became very daunting when I realized I would be without my husband for about 36 hours because he had to return home to work. After a meltdown and pulling myself together and deciding to push through, I sent him on his way.

That evening I let my Amazing Team know that I would be flying solo the next day and I was a bit nervous and would really need their help with Meredith. Well, let me just tell you, that was the beginning of a wonderful and amazing week for this mama and little girl and daddy too, when he returned to find us extremely happy and doing awesome! Our team of volunteers, team leaders, nurses, high school volunteers all totally stepped up and became a part of our family and I love them dearly for their support and love! Then there was the love and support that came from the other families and campers that also pulled us in and lifted us up!

I will just say that my husband came back and was pleasantly surprised by my turn around about being at VACC Camp when he returned and the week ended up being one of the best gifts our family has received in the seven and a half years since we began this life of trachs, oxygen tanks and concentrators, suction machines and medical supplies galore! We feel very blessed to have been given this opportunity and look forward to watching Meredith build life-long friendships from her VACC Camp experiences and helping to show our family that we can lean on others and can grow our circle of love and family!

A special thank you to you Bela! You helped make this possible for our family and Meredith and I have so much admiration and respect for all of your hard work and how you and your team make this such and amazing experience for everyone.

Edward and Sonya Griffin with Meredith



Meredith first day at camp



Meredith at Bird Bowl



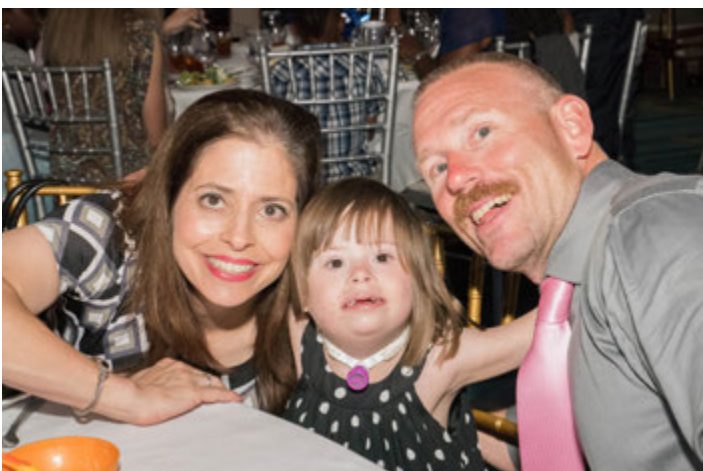
Campers Meredith and Sergio Carrasco



Meredith with volunteers Melina Sadeghi and Nicole Umpierre



Meredith with parents Edward and Sonya at a western event



Meredith with her parents Edward and Sonya at the 30th anniversary celebration

Que fue el VACC Camp para los Medinas? Fue y es la experiencia mas maravillosa que pudieramos explicar. Mi nena Michelle siempre estuvo rodeada de buenos amigos que la hacian sentir que ella no tenia ningunas limitaciones. Asi la criamos. Siempre estaba involucrada en toda actividad, Bueno, eso yo creia hasta que llegue a ese fabuloso campamento. Cuando ella y nosotros vimos tantos nenes con sus traqueas en sillas de ruedas tan felices de estar alli, su carita cambio, fue como decir wow, estan como yo. Y verlos hacer tantas actividades me conmovio mucho, diferentes juegos y bailes. Ir al mar en Veleros, eso nunca pense que lo podia hacer ella, disfruto tanto ese paseo, estaba feliz y luego, entrar al mar en esa silla con todos esos voluntaries. Yo aterrada y ella brincando que queria ir, mi esposo le dijo, dale hija tu quieres pues montate. Y yo orando que todo saliera bien jajaja pero no sabia que tan organizado. y cuidadoso es el doctor. Y la comida en el restaurant con los nenes en el Hard Rock café, fue super. No podia creer lo que mi hija estaba haciendo, bailando con los nenes pendiente de que le tomaran video a ella. Fue una bella experiencia, en verdad lo disfruto ella y nosotros tambien. Habian tres nenes que ella queria mucho, Christopher por lo loquito que decia ella que el es porque corria con su sillita.por el campamento, Otro que ya hoy no esta con nosotros, esta como ella dormido en la muerte, ella le tenia profundo cariño, ella siempre estaba pendiente de limpiarle su boquita. A ella le gustaba ayudar a los que para ella estaban indefensos por no poder moverse por si mismos. Bellos recuerdos. Aprendimos que estos nenes pueden disfrutar la vida como nosotros, viajar por avion, navegar por el mar, nadar y muchas cosas mas. GRACIAS VACC CAMP POR ENSEARNOS A VER LA VIDA DE NUESTROS HIJOS CON OTRA VISION. Y GRACIAS A TODOS LOS VOLUNTARIOS PORQUE SIN ELLOS NO ES POSIBLE TAN BELLA LABOR. Y A LA ENFERMERA Y A BELA POR TANTA PACIENCIA. GRACIAS MIL GRACIAS en nombre de nuestra hija Michelle y de nosotros. Israel Y Damelis Medina.

What was the VACC Camp for the Medinas? It was and is the most wonderful experience we could have had. My baby Michelle was always surrounded by good friends that made her feel that she did not have any limitations. That is how we raised her. She was always involved in every activity, or so we thought until we arrived to this fabulous VACC Camp. When we all saw so many kids with their traches and some on wheelchairs so happy to be there, my daughter's facial expression changed, it was like saying WOW, they are like me!! And to see them do so many activities, different games and dances, it moved us. Going sailing, we never thought that she could do that, she enjoyed that field trip so much, she was very happy and then, entering the sea in the special beach chair with all those volunteers. I was terrified and she was jumping that she wanted to go, my husband said, go on daughter, you want to do it, go!! I was praying for everything to be fine, lol, little did I know how careful and organized the doctor was. And having lunch at the Hard Rock Café, was superb. I could not believe what my daughter was doing, dancing with all the kids expecting to be videotaped. It really was a beautiful experience, she truly enjoyed it and we did too. There were a couple of kids at camp that she really loved, Christopher, running with his little chair all over camp; another one that is not with us anymore like my daughter, she had deep affection for him, Michelle was always ready to wipe his mouth. She liked helping those that were helpless and could not move by themselves. Beautiful memories. We learned that these kids can enjoy life like us, travel by plane, they can navigate in the sea, go swimming and much more. THANK YOU VACC CAMP FOR TEACHING US TO SEE THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE AND THANKS TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS BECAUSE WITHOUT THEM THIS BEAUTIFUL CAMP WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE, AND TO THE NURSE AND TO BELA FOR SO MUCH PATIENCE. THANK YOU A THOUSAND TIMES IN THE NAME OF OUR DAUGHTER MICHELLE AND US. Israel and Damelis Medina.



Michelle and her parents Damelis and Israel sailing at Shake-a-Leg



Michelle with her mother Damelis



Michelle dancing at hard rock behind volunteer Ashley Echavarria



Michelle enjoying the sea using the special beach chair with the firefighters helping her.



Michelle with Mark McCarthy at wildlife show



Damelis and Israel came to celebrate VACC Camp 30th anniversary

10/14/98
Mr. Simpson,
Maybe you can show these to
parents of kids like Morgan to
prove that if you let a kid
just be a normal kid, they
can do anything. There was
a time when I never thought
I would see my son do this
and I get letters from parents
from the CHS Network all
the time asking what can they
do to help their children enjoy
the water like other kids...
I just send them a picture!
Morgan wants to surprise
you at next camp with this
So don't let on you know
Sincerely
Morgan Niehaus



MORGAN AND HIS MOTHER THROUGH THE YEARS AT CAMP



How amazing it is to look back thirty years ago remembering how cautious and frightened we were arriving at the Skip Camp in Miami, and to have unexpectedly received the most loving support and quality care that would change our lives in dramatic positive ways. Our daughter and our family benefitted by the educated state of the arts developments for ventilation dependent children. We came away confident and secure that our support system was finally in place and would be there any time we needed it. Our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Simpser and his staff.

Michelle Demott



Nicole at farewell Piñata in 1988



Nicole with camper Gregory Solis in 1988 with professional photographer Michael Carlebach



Nicole at camp with Greg Solis



Left to right: Elizabeth Platter and her son (camper) Anthony Dr. Moises Simper, Camper Nicole Demott, Joan Gebo, her son (camper) Kevin and Barbara Donaghy, ARNP. In 2006

Sage Mauerman
Camper 2016 to present

VACC camp was such an inspiration for our family. We enjoyed getting to know the families that already had so much experience with raising a child with a Trach. Our whole family enjoyed all the outings - it was so much fun for us to spend that time all together and for my other children to meet other kids like our daughter. It has given us the courage to have more family adventures of our own. Thank you so much VACC camp for opening our eyes to more possibilities!!!

Janessa Gunther (Sage Mauerman’s mother)



The Mauerman family, Janessa, Paul, Nola, Hugo, Grey and Sage



Sage with mother Janessa and sister Nola



Sage in 2017



Sage and her mother Janessa enjoying the wildlife show



The Mauerman family with Joanne and Francisco España and a few volunteers at the VACC Camp’s 30th Anniversary celebration



Sage with dad Paul exiting the cruise at Bayside

To all the people who had the opportunity to go to VACC camp I don't have to tell you the joy it was. I guess the most fun I ever had was watching my daughter Salome McCaffrey interacting with all the kids. " Dr . Mo was the biggest kid of all." I truly love Dr. Mo as we called him because you can't say Moises Simpser in one breath on a ventilator so Salome nicknamed him "Dr. Mo' over twenty-five years ago and the name stuck. Before Salome passed away she planed her year around camp. She would thrive to get there. Just knowing there would be kids there who didn't see her as handicap but as a girl who wanted to have fun. My favorite time was the water gun fights. Salome dreamed of running her own camp some-day. Dr. Mo you gave to me the joy in my little girl's heart. I thank you for that. You will always have a special place in my heart. My home is full of pictures of you all.

Debbie McCaffrey & Family



Salome at therapy dogs



Salome with volunteer Carmen Prieto



Salome with her mom Debbie and her aunt Carman



Salome with volunteer Natalie Asorey and Dr. Moises Simpser



Salome with volunteer Johanna S. Melcon



Salome with Volunteer Natalie Asorey and Carnival actors



Salome next to Campers Annelise Trapp and Elliot Ortegon and Elliot's mom Judy

Sergio has enjoyed the years he has made it to VACC Camp, and even the years he has not he asks are we going this year. He has made some great friends which he still keeps in contact with. He has gotten to experience some of the best adventures and has been given the chance to be around other children that have come to adjust to the world like him. In the area we live in, there are no other children like him and he feels “different” most of the time. VACC camp has given him the opportunity to see he is not different and that there are other children like him in the world today.

Shannon Carrasco (mother of Sergio Carrasco)



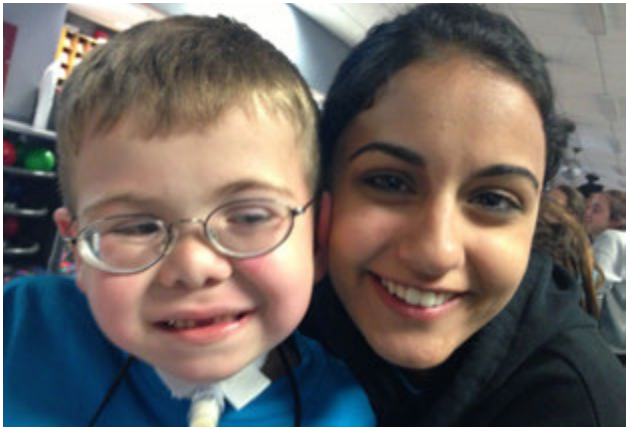
Sergio



Sergio playing during carnival



Sergio at Therapy dogs



Sergio with volunteer Melina Sadeghi at Bird Bowl



Sergio with mom Shannon, sisters Veronica and Seryna and brother Lorenzo at prom night



Sergio with his mother Shannon and sister Seryna at Western event



Sergio and his mom Shannon at the 30th anniversary celebration

VACC camp a sido para mi familia una Bendición. Yo estoy esperando todo el año por la semana de VACC Camp, donde me divierto al máximo, tengo nuevos amigos, me he sentido en familia. Desde que yo ni caminaba iba al Camp y ahora bailo, modelo y canto pero siempre VACC camp estará en mi corazón. Las mejores vivencias de mi vida las he tenido en VACC Camp. Dr. Simpser, Bela, Ivette, MCH y todo el equipo gracias, gracias por crear VACC camp y darnos una semana de alegría que nos dura todo el año!!! Vivire siempre agradecida por VACC camp. Los amooooo,

Stephanie Cortijo, la princesa del Camp.

VACC Camp has been a blessing for me and my family. I wait all year long for the VACC Camp week where I have a lot of fun, make new friends, and feel like family. I started going to camp when I could not even walk and now I can dance, model, and sing, and VACC Camp will always be in my heart. I have had the best experiences of my life in VACC Camp. A big thanks to Dr. Simpser, Bela, Ivette, MCH and all the staff, thank you, thank you for creating VACC Camp and giving us a week of happiness that lasts all year!! I will always be grateful for VACC Camp. I love you!!

Stephanie Cortijo, The VACC Camp princess.



Stephanie with volunteer
Angelica Matta



Stephanie in the pool



Stephanie in the cruise



Stephanie with the aloha
islanders at Luau



Stephanie with volunteer
Carmen Prieto



Stephanie in 2009



Stephanie with camper Andrea
Patrick in 2013



Stephanie in 2016



Stephanie with the mother Ivelisse
and sister Mia at the
30th anniversary celebration

Stephonne Gassant
Camper 1997-2011, 2016

Happy 30th Anniversary VACC Camp. It is a blessing to witness us grow as a family. You guys taught me how to be more loving and caring to other people. Also you guys gave me the courage that even though I'm in a wheelchair I can do and be anything and everything if I set my mind to it. I had great times with you guys. From jumping off the diving board with Doctor Simpser, having my high school football team come play with us, but not only that, also going to Bayside, shake-a-leg, and to the beach, having water gun fights, talent shows, Hawaiian nights and country night, and the list goes on and on. I don't have a specific favorite, all of it was amazing and I will cherish every minute of it. Love.

Your retired VACC Camp King Stephonne Gassant



Stephonne his first year 1997



In 1998 With volunteer Susan Ambler



Stephonne with volunteer Carolyn Beno



Stephonne with volunteer Donald Fife



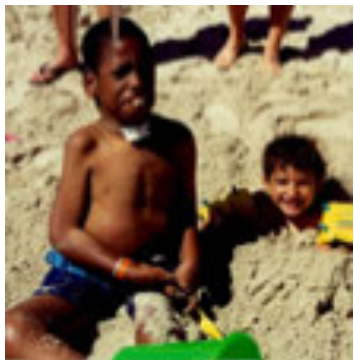
Stephonne Kayaking with volunteer Ruben Rueda



Stephonne with volunteer Vanessa Gonzalez-Retes



Stephonne, Mark & Ruth Chibis and Justin



Stephonne in Nikki Beach with Noelia's son



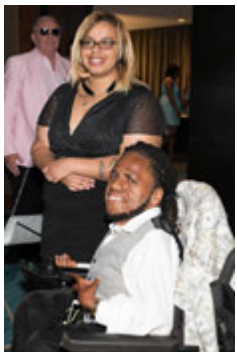
Stephonne with volunteers Carolyn Beno and Jessica Rivero at the 20th anniversary celebration



Stephonne with camper Stephanie Cortijo and operation staff Eliana Alvarado-Lyne



Stephonne at the 25th VACC Camp Anniversary event



Stephonne and his fiancée at VACC Camp 30th anniversary

What VACC Camp means to us.

In 2006 our son Tyler was hospitalized. Tyler had been hospitalized due to his chronic lung disease. Because of the seriousness of his illness Tyler required a tracheostomy and a ventilator. We were completely devastated and terrified by the seriousness of his condition. We bought a recliner and put it in Tyler's room so that I could stay by his side while he slept. I thought that life as we knew it was over and that I would spend all of my time in his room caring for him. In 2007 we were invited to VACC Camp after we had heard about it from friends we met at Miami Children's Hospital. We decided to give it a try, unsure but willing to do anything to bring a smile to Tyler's face again. Needless to say we were scared and at first, my husband, daughter, Tyler and myself, stood around by ourselves observing the camp activities instead of participating. Tyler's sister did not take her eyes off of him and was against Tyler participating in some of the events because she wanted him be safe. We watched as the other parents were so relaxed and trusting, allowing their children to wander around freely with the volunteers. It was so strange and surreal, in the beginning.

The hardest day and the best day was pool day. We witnessed the mix of volunteer nurses, respiratory therapists and campers with both fear and fascination as they went into the water, ambu bags ready. Tyler going back into the pool seemed out of the question once he received his ventilator, but somehow these other kids were doing it and having the time of their lives. We wondered if they could handle Tyler. He was very fragile, we didn't usually let other people take care of him, especially strangers. Finally Dr. Simper was in the water calling for us to hand Tyler over to him. We did and what happened was truly a miracle. My husband and daughter were in the water with him the entire time. I tried to remain calm and watch for any signs of distress, but there was nothing to be concerned about. The only thing was Tyler was so happy.

We learned so much during our first VACC camp experience. After camp was done and we returned home, we decided not to confine Tyler to his room. We wanted to put to use what we learned in VACC Camp and take Tyler in the pool at home. We also started to do more and take Tyler everywhere we went. Having attended VACC camp gave us the confidence we needed to continue with our new life. We are so grateful to have attended VACC Camp, especially Parent's Night Out. That night we listened and shared with other parents that were facing the same challenges we were facing every day. Dr. Simper gave us the tools we needed to enjoy our family as any other normal family.

After VACC Camp we were able to go on family vacations to the beach, we went to the mall, we went out to the movies. We even took Tyler back to swim with the dolphins at Island Dolphin Care and enjoyed two cruise vacations. Our life was back to normal even though we had to make sure we always had extra oxygen and back up batteries for the ventilator and numerous equipment on hand. We loved VACC Camp, but what we were most grateful for what the true happiness and belonging our whole family found in such a special place. As we returned, Tyler was able to make so many new friends and hang out with the other volunteers as well. In 2013 was our last VACC Camp. We lost Tyler but I know that he is watching Dr. Simper and his friends from up above.

The Fauerbach Family



Tyler in the pool with his mom Liz



Tyler in the pool with his dad Troy



Tyler in the pool with nurse Francesca Blanchard



Tyler with Luau dance



Tyler with volunteer Carmen Prieto



Tyler and mom at Nikki Beach



Tyler at Bird Bowl



Tyler at Shake-a-leg with parents Liz and Troy and sister kayla



Tyler at farewell receiving his group photo from Dr. Simper



Tyler and Marianela Llanes enjoying the music at the Hard Rock café event.



Liz at VACC Camp's 30th anniversary celebration with Nadine Harrison and Bob Dinnigan

Volunteers

Teenagers and Adults

Adriana Torres
Volunteer 2013 – 2016
Volunteer team leader 2017



Throughout my childhood, I had always been a very timid kid. When I was 14 years old, my sister, who was a Team Leader at the time, asked if I wanted to volunteer in VACC Camp. I was very indecisive whether or not to join due to my shyness but in the end I decided to sign up to experience how camp was really like. Ever since the decision of joining, I have gained numerous special bonds with the campers, the parents and the volunteers. Because of the unique faces in VACC Camp, I have become the person who I am today and that is something that I will forever cherish within my heart.

Alejandro Martinez
Volunteer 2016
Volunteer team leader 2017



VACC Camp holds a special place in my heart. Like most people, I saw it as a quick way to get service hours, only to realize that it is much more. VACC Camp is a way of life for our campers, a week of fun that lets them be free and interact with people who care and understand them. VACC Camp is a week of fun, games, excitement, and parties (no one throws parties like VACC camp does!) This is a place to make long lasting friends and have fun doing it. VACC Camp now holds a place in my heart, and I'll be volunteering for as many years as I can provide

Alexander Lafortune
Volunteer 2011-2013



VACC CAMP changed my life in a positive way. I went to different camps as a child, all kinds of camps, and I never really understood what I got out of it until I worked as a volunteer in VACC CAMP when I was in high school. It was then that I finally realized what I had learned as a camper, because of what I saw my campers learn. Each spring, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital hosts a free week-long overnight camp for ventilation assisted children (children needing a tracheostomy ventilator, C-PAP, BiPAP, or oxygen to support breathing) and their families. Overnight campers come from throughout the United States.

I had the opportunity to develop the role modeling skills. Campers are like sponges, they’ll absorb whatever is around them. You can create a more pleasant camp for everyone by surrounding your campers with positive influences — namely you. Your campers will look up to you and want to be like you, so always be aware of what you are doing and saying, as your campers will be watching. That helped me change the way I used to live. Now I’m more careful about everything I do and talk. VACC CAMP helped me to remain positive. Make smart choices, not because they are easier or because you might otherwise be caught and get into trouble, but because they are simply the right things to do. Be who you want your campers to be. I thank VACC CAMP for giving me the opportunity to be a better person in life.

Alexander Maturell
Volunteer from 2011-2016



VACC Camp holds a special place in my heart. I have been volunteering for 6 years now and continue to love every minute of it. It is such a rewarding experience as I get to make great connections with the wonderful children and their families. There is nothing better than putting a smile not only on the child’s face but also the parents as well, knowing all the struggles and hard work they all have put in to be in the position they are today. I have made so many close friends and great memories during my 6 years here at VACC Camp that I will cherish forever.

Alexandra Lopez
Volunteer 2003-2007 and 2009-2013



I first heard of VACC CAMP when I was a freshmen in high school. I just thought I would volunteer only for one year. Little did I know that I would fall in love with this community. I would look forward each year for my spring break because I knew that camp was around the corner! Through VACC CAMP I met a lot of wonderful families. I gave 10 years to camp. I started as a young girl that matured to a young adult. I had to leave camp because I had adult duties. Because of camp I became an occupational therapist. My life has been forever touched.

Alyssa Garcia
Volunteer 2009 to present
Volunteer Team leader 2010 -2015
Volunteer Operations Staff 2016.....



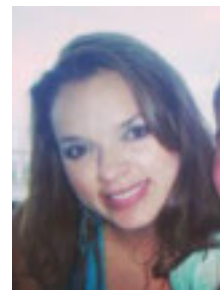
VACC Camp has been an amazing experience. I remember first volunteering for the community service hours nine years ago and within the first hours of the camp deciding that I wanted to keep coming back. I have continued to come back through college and graduate school. VACC Camp has changed the way I view life. As a volunteer I have been able to see campers grow up and improve, I have been able to see joy and laughter, and I have been able to be a part of a fantastic group of volunteers and staff that have become lifelong friends.

Andrew Pena
Volunteer 2007-2010



VACC Camp is definitely a life changing experience. The staff and volunteers all come together to enjoy a wonderful time with the campers. At the end of the day there is nothing better than sharing wonderful memories and having the chance to brighten up their lives at camp.

Angelica Matta
Volunteer 2007-2009



Today is my first day of class in Medical School, and they will speak to us about the compassion, humanity, and importance of the doctor-patient relationship. I am blessed to say that I was taught this concept for many years by Dr. Simper and staff and in the best classroom: VACC Camp. This organization played a pivotal role in my development as a professional and as a human being. The patients inspired me in every level and taught me about perseverance and strength, as well as gratefulness for their legacy when we had to see them go to Heaven. We are a family that expands across the nation, teaching everyone about the power of tolerance and selflessness with others. My assigned camper for many years, little Stephanie, has been my mentor, and she doesn't even know it. When she was learning how to walk, I was learning to walk along with her, after an accident that almost took my life. Because of her, I lifted myself up when I felt I couldn't bear the pain anymore. My dream is to sit down with her when she's older and express to her how much she inspired me, and that my love for her and all our campers has no expiration date. We could all write a diary on the impact VACC Camp has had on our lives, but the best way to understand it, is to experience it yourself. God bless you!

Anthony Camejo
Volunteer 2008, 2011-present
Volunteer team leader 2012 -2015
Volunteer Operations staff 2016-present



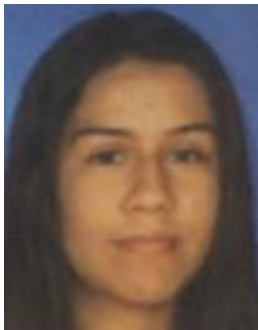
VACC Camp has changed my life in ways that I, even my family, couldn't have imagined. The campers and their families, with the infinite optimism that they bear, have inspired me to see life in a different light. To value the relationships I have with the people around me, instead of the superficial things such as cell phones and new cars. With all the obstacles they face, be it something as simple as going to the store or as hazardous as a new surgery, they have become heroes to all the volunteers and staff members of the organization.

Areila Maturell
Volunteer 2012- 2016



VACC Camp has taught me that you are not defined by a disability or a stereotype. These kids and their families are the most resilient people I have met. They bring joy and laughter to not only each other, but the volunteers and staff members as well. Camp has given me friends and memories that will last a lifetime.

Ariana Garay
Volunteer 2016



Camp has opened up my eyes, I learned to become more compassionate thanks to it. I also found out just what amazing things could be accomplished with team work and the dedicated people who organize camp. The memories made at camp are ones that people will carry on for a life time, I know I will. I have made so many friends who I love so much, from campers to volunteers. It was the best week of my life and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.☺

Ashley Echevarria
Volunteer 2011-2015, 2017
Volunteer team leader 2013-2014



VACC Camp has changed not only the lives of the campers but of the volunteers as well. Just being in the presence of all the participants is enough to motivate anyone to get out there and do whatever they can to make a difference in the world. The experiences, memories, and friendships that this camp has allowed me to foster have made me who I am today and shall remain with me.

Audrey Daugherty
Volunteer 2008, 2011-present
Volunteer 2015-present
Volunteer Team leader 2017



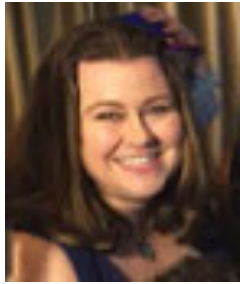
VACC Camp is a wonderful place where disabled children can enjoy the activities that they usually can't. To me VACC Camp is a heart-warming experience that makes you realize everything in your life that you take for granted. This place is so joyful and exciting that one realizes it is so easy to be happy about the simplest things.

Betty Flores
VACC Camp volunteer 2000-2001



How can you describe a life changing experience? I was a junior in High School when I volunteered at VACC Camp. The best memory I have is sitting next to Dr. Simpser at dinner one night, he asked-what will you pursue as a career next year? I said I'm not sure yet. He answered "whatever you do I know you will be great at it". Those words impacted my life. I was here to give of my time and energy for volunteer hours; I suddenly became the receiver. The best part is everything from the leadership, parents, activities and the friendships. VACC Camp Thank you for the lives you impact daily.

Carmen Prieto
Volunteer 1998-2008
Volunteer team leader 2005-2007
Volunteer Operations staff 2008



You never truly realize how ordinary your life is, until something extraordinary happens. You'd like to think you have an idea of who you are, and how the world sees you.... But until you've spent a week at VACC Camp, you pretty much have blinders on. To say Salome McCaffrey, and the "pals" that followed changed my life is truly an understatement. April 21, 1997. That's the day my life truly began. That's the day that I learned my purpose in life. Not everyone is lucky enough to figure it out that early. But 20 years later, the relationships that began then, are still playing out. The people I met at camp are still a major part of my life. I thank God every day that Dr. Simpson talked me into staying. I have no interest in knowing who I'd be without VACC Camp! Thank you for the lifetime relationships and memories. Forever in my heart Salome, Chris, Lisa and Tyler.

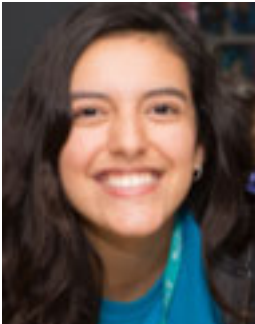
All my love.

Carolina Agudelo
Volunteer 2016-2017



My experience at VACC Camp is one I will never forget. This was my first year attending camp and it certainly won't be my last. Throughout the entirety of camp and training I was inspired by all the hard work put in by the leaders and organizers of the camp, specifically Dr. Simpson. To be able to come up with such an incredible idea and risk the unknown is truly inspiring. Bela and Rose Ann should also be recognized for all their hard work in organizing camp and making sure it runs smoothly. You can see the passion in their faces and the love they have for camp, and I find this admirable. Camp was something entirely different. Never have I ever experienced such a satisfying exhaustion; every day was an adventure. The campers and their families touched my heart in more than one way. How they are able to overcome and look past their disabilities and enjoy all the pleasures of life is something I will never forget. VACC Camp isn't just about giving these children a fun time, it's about living life to the fullest, taking chances in the unknown, and above all family. It was a privilege to be able to take part in this magnificent organization. Thank you VACC Camp!

Carolina Ramirez
Volunteer 2012-13, 2015-16



I first participated in VACC Camp when I was a junior in high school. I needed community service hours for school and this was a quick way to get them over with, even if it meant giving up my spring break. One week with those kids and I fell in love with the camp. I realized I hadn't given up anything by volunteering but was actually given the wonderful opportunity of getting to know incredible, selfless kids. I found myself returning my senior year and then again as a reluctantly part-time volunteer for my sophomore year of college because I couldn't miss too much class. I had missed out on VACC Camp the year before, but this time I was determined to be able to enjoy at least part of it because it broke my heart to find out one of my old campers, Armando, missed me. Not a patient of Nicklaus Children's Hospital himself, Mariana's older brother was my very first camper and holds a special place in my heart because I see how great of a big brother he is. The entire Acosta family is so loving and full of life that they are one of the main reasons I can't stay away from camp.

Catie Schwartzman
Volunteer 2014- present



My favorite week of the year is when I'm surrounded by open-hearted, genuine people, both campers and staff, where activities I always love to do, like sailing and swimming, become experiences unique to VACC. VACC Camp is such a special world to me that I created a line of necklaces inspired in design by tracheostomies to raise money for VACC Camp and spread awareness about tracheostomies so that ventilation-assisted people feel more comfortable in themselves. VACC Camp has taught me to never miss an opportunity that life offers me; becoming a volunteer was one of the best decisions I've made.

Chiara Jacobus
Volunteer 2015-present



Although I have only participated one year so far VACC Camp means a lot to me, as I'm sure it means to many others. Volunteering has given me the opportunity to help and interact with kids, both of which I love to do. It is amazing how much work is put into the camp every year to make it such a big success in helping families everywhere and I plan on continuing to spend every spring break To volunteer and help out as much as possible.

Thank you to Dr. Simpser, Ms. Bela, and Ms. Rose Anne, the medical staff, and everyone who has contributed to VACC Camp to make it successful every year!

Christian V. Chang
Volunteer 2011-14, 2016



I volunteered at camp my sophomore year in high school and honestly, I had no idea what to expect. I remember the first day being extremely nervous as to what to do or what to talk about with the campers. As soon as I met my camper, however, all of those worries went away. I had the pleasure of meeting an individual named Kenny who had a whole lot to say as we spent the week running around camp talking to people he was interested in meeting. After an event filled week (which felt more like just a long day), it had come to the last day. It was then that I learned that VACC camp doesn't say goodbye and instead, says see you later. I have been now going to VACC camp for four years and still can't think of a better way to spend my spring break. VACC Camp WOOT WOOT!

Christina Perez
Volunteer 2010-present
Volunteer team leader 2012-present



Given one word to describe VACC CAMP, I would say it's impossible: It's impossible not to say that VACC Camp is an amazing opportunity for all the campers, families, and volunteers to work alongside each other, changing each other lives without even knowing that it is happening.

Impossible not to do all that we do for free.

Impossible not to want to return and want to be part of the cause.

Impossible not to say that we make the impossible possible.

The word impossible to me doesn't mean unable to be done; it means I'M POSSIBLE.

My name is Christina Perez and I have been volunteering for VACC camp for six years now and every year there's a new story, new memory, and a new live changed from the time they walk in to the time they leave. I am VACC camp and I would never change that aspect of my life even if I was given a million dollars. VACC camp has changed my life by letting me see how when you put your heart into something so much can be accomplished.

Cindy Santana
Volunteer 2016



Being part of VACC Camp has to have been one of my most wonderful and unforgettable experiences. I am so glad to have had the chance to collaborate in such a friendly environment and to have been able to make so many memories with campers, families, and volunteers. It has certainly changed my perspective on life. I am anxiously looking forward for next year's adventures! I can't wait to reunite with the families and friends that I created a close bond with or to meet new campers, volunteers and families. This one week of camp transforms the lives of campers and their families; it changes their views on many things and it makes them happier individuals with higher aspirations. This one-of-kind experience allows these ventilation assisted kids, which once were not allowed to leave a hospital, to have normal life and have fun with friends which they would have normally never met because of the detrimental barriers of life. "Where the party at? Right here right now!! VACC Camp! Woot Woot!"

Daina Garcia
Volunteer 2013-2016
Team Leader 2017



When I started VACC Camp, I really didn't know what to expect. I guess I was searching for something to at the very least pass the time, yet what I found was this magical place. I know it sounds childish when put that way, but VACC Camp was/is so alive with positive energy. The campers have so much fun, and when you see a smile on a campers face it makes the whole week worth it. I love VACC Camp and I'm going to keep volunteering for as long as I can.

Dixie Carmona
Volunteer 2014 - present



VACC Camp is so special to me, and I'm glad I get the chance to be a part of this camp. It has changed my whole outlook on life in a positive manner. The anticipation for this one week out of the whole year is an exciting feeling, and I hope to come back every year.

Djimy Joseph
Volunteer 2015-present



Dr. Simpser is an inspiration to all. The program really changes the lives of all who take part. VACC Camp is an incredible experience and I will continue to be a part of such a great thing for as long as possible.

Dominic Quiros
Volunteer 2011-2012



My name is Dominic Quiros, and I was involved in VACC Camp for 2 years as a volunteer back in my high school days. The thing that captivated me the most about camp was the simplicity behind it, and the ability to touch and change the lives of the many I got to meet and be a part of camp with. I learned a little sign language, and I got to be a part of somebody's incredibly difficult life that is: being confined to a wheelchair or a device that helps keep them alive, such as a ventilator, tracheostomy, or something else. The most memorable experiences were definitely the countless smiles I and my team members were able to put onto the camper's faces. I know their faces were lit up like no others and I wouldn't trade that experience for anything else in the world. There were so many events and moments I can recall from VACC Camp, but I think the main thing anybody should know to take away from this, is the overall feeling you give and get when you take care of the campers as if they were your younger brother and/or sister.

Eliana Lyne
Volunteer 2001- present
Volunteer team leader 2005 – 2006
Volunteer operations staff 2007 to present



The last 17 years volunteering at Vacc Camp have meant the world to me! I started volunteering as a teenager for community service hours and instantly fell in love with camp! It’s an ongoing lifelong love affair that I cherish and am passing onto my children who already love camp just as much as me! I look forward to it all year long more than my birthday and any holiday. The time I spend at camp making a difference in the lives of so many will always be a priority in my life.

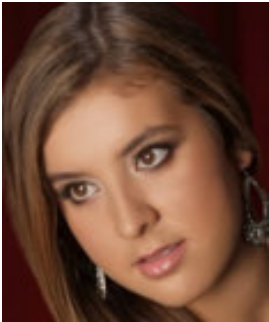
Vacc Camp is the first thing I mention in every job interview or classes taken because nothing has or will ever stop me from attending the best seven days I look forward to all year every year! There is nothing in this world like experiencing the first time one of our campers on a trach enters the water to go swimming for the first time or watching them interact, socialize, and make friends like any normal teenager on a daily basis. It’s a pleasure and a privilege to share these moments/milestones with these families. Thank you Dr. Simpser for making them possible!!

Elizabeth Gomez
Volunteer 2012- present
Volunteer Team leader 2013-present



I have been volunteering at VACC Camp for the past 5 years and I can honestly say that it doesn’t feel like volunteering anymore, it has become a second home. Now I can talk endlessly about this camp and what it has done for me but we would be here for days, so if there is one thing that I’d say it would be this: “they say a smile is worth a thousand words, well, these children tell a million stories with their smiles” and that is enough reason for me to love this camp like my home

Emily Quintero
Volunteer 2009-2012



Emily just graduated as a physician in 2016!! Congratulations to her and much luck in her future from her VACC Camp family!!!

Dr. Simpser, you may not know the impact you had on me, but I can assure you it was a great one. Thanks to the wonderful camp you created, my passion for medicine unraveled. I was once a patient at MCH, and diagnosed with an adenocarcinoma. Being in a great state of denial, I realized that this incident was merely an obstacle presented to me by life; but after dedicating my time for the children at VACC Camp, my perspective on life changed. One should enjoy the beautiful moments life gives you and never take these moments for granted. Many of the children you care for are prisoners at the hospital, and when they go home, they are also isolated from society; but when they go to camp, they experience freedom! VACC Camp has allowed every single camper to push their limits and discover things in life they thought they would never be able to do. We sing, we dance, we swim, and we cry. The way I see it is that these wheelchairs are not barriers, but merely inspirations to society. At the end of each week of camp we all become a family, and it’s never easy saying goodbye. Camp has influenced my future goals to become a physician, specifically helping disadvantaged populations. Like you once stated, everybody is entitled to high quality medical care, and I think you have most definitely accomplished your goals as a physician. The love you give to your patients is invaluable. No actions may thank all the motivation and support the campers and staff at VACC Camp have granted me. On behalf of every heart you touched and life you inspired, thank you for 30 great years of enthusiasm and hope. Life would just not be the same without VACC Camp.

Emma Lam
Volunteer 2015 - present



VACC Camp is definitely an experience which touches the lives of every person involved, no matter for how short the period. Although the camp is incredibly intensive, the memories and friendships created makes all the work well worth it.

Ernesto Rodriguez
Volunteer 2016 -2017



What did camp mean to me?

I was nervous at first then, after the first day I felt like we weren't all volunteers and camper but one huge family. Being able to meet so many great people was a great experience. This spring break to me was one of my best spring breaks and I am hoping to come back every year so that my new family may grow even more.

Evianni Chang
Volunteer 2011-2014



I was part of VACC Camp for 4 years. And I have to say VACC camp has been the most rewarding week of my life for those years because it was so special to be able to see all these kids' excitement. This week was nothing but special to me because of all the laughter and love each camper, volunteer, family, and staff showed. To me VACC Camp taught me how to love and grow with people I had just met. It made me so excited to go back and see the new adventures it had in store.

Gilbert Pareja
Volunteer 2010-2014, 2016
Volunteer team leader 2012-2014



VACC Camp is a life changing experience that will carry on with me until I kick the bucket. My name is Gilbert Pareja, and I've been involved with VACC Camp for at least 7 years now, and I can truly say that it is a unique experience each year. How would I describe VACC Camp to someone completely new you ask? I'd first recommend this volunteer experience to anyone interested in a pre-med track, or any sort of healthcare field. While your initial interests might not be working alongside patients in wheelchairs, or with tracheostomies per se, it's not the main focus of the camp. VACC Camp exposes you to another world, and the daily struggles that these children face are brought to a very real perspective for everyone to see. The week-long spring break sheds light upon the fact that these are just a fraction of many other wheelchair dependent individuals throughout the world who are undergoing a similar experience. By the end of the week, you'll find yourself having a better understanding of how despite all the obstacles placed before them, these children are willing to overcome the extra mile and make a difference in the world, and ultimately teaches you that no matter what, this life we live, is a human experience regardless of what difficulties you face and will teach you to see the other side to every coin.

Heidy Armenteros Carbot
Volunteer 1991-2000



25 years ago, I was doing an internship with Dr. Simpser as part of my high school curriculum. I sat and watched him treat patients, went on rounds and listened to every word he said. In early spring, he asked me to volunteer at VACC Campreluctantly I said yes but could only volunteer for a few hours one day. I don't remember how much I ended up volunteering but it was much more than just a few hours. I came back year after year and volunteered more than 80 hours each year. I can truly say that VACC camp, to this day, still has a huge place in my heart. I loved those children and learned how to truly live and how to truly love. I became a physical therapist because of my time with Dr. Simpser and those kids. I laughed with them, I cried with the families and I learned that life is what you make it. Despite having a physical handicap, there are no limitations to the achievements a child can make. VACC camp provides the opportunity for children to find their potential and to make friends that last a lifetime.

Happy 30th anniversary VACC Camp!!!

Hidysbeth Martinez
Volunteer 2012-present



"Hi my name is Hidysbeth Martinez. I've been in VACC Camp for 6 years now; in those years I've made friends that have become like family to me. VACC Camp helped shape my career path, I am now studying pediatric surgery. I thank Dr. Simpser greatly for having founded VACC Camp, it has become a part of my life forever!"

Hunter Rodriguez
Volunteer 2012-2015
Volunteer team leader 2014-2015



VACC Camp is such an important part of my life. It has changed my perspective on many things and introduced me to some of the most amazing people I know. Through VACC camp, I have tremendously grown as a person. The week we spend at camp has become my favorite week of the year. I am so thankful to have the opportunity to be part of such an amazing group of people.

Jacqueline Cabrera
Volunteer 2010-2012



"V.A.C.C Camp" is the place to be! Dedicating my spring break to this camp has been a life changing experience. At first, I was a nervous wreck. I didn't know how to act nor reach out to these kids who are on ventilators. After the second day of this camp, it dawned on me that these kids are just like us except they were stronger. They are on ventilators, quadriplegic, and some may not be able to speak. The main reason of this camp is to demonstrate that we are all unique in our special way. The families as well as the campers come to this camp to make connections with those who relate to them. The volunteers help them feel welcomed. This camp not only is an eye opener to the beauty of differences, but it also allows everyone to be happy. It makes an impact in everyone's life, including the volunteers. I fell in love with this camp and the connections I've made with the families and campers. The friendships begin in this camp and continue to blossom outside of it as well. The memories made will forever be in my heart.

James Santiago London
Volunteer 2007-2015
Volunteer team leader 2009-2015



As a 15 year old, I came to this camp chasing after a girl. As a 26 year old, I can tell you that never has chasing after girls turned into such a rewarding experience. VACC CAMP is a self-help camp, it is a getting out of your shell camp, it is a learning to love people for who they are camp, it is a meet your best friends camp, it is a medical training camp, and it is a "how to teach adults to be in touch with their younger selves camp."

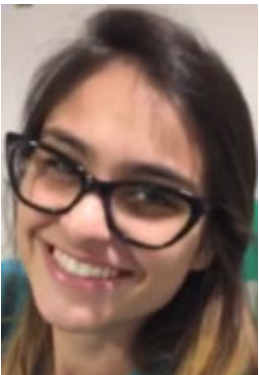
VACC Camp has been a life defining experience for each of the 11 weeks I have spent there. (11 years!) I learned to not judge and more importantly, not to feel judged. I learned to be comfortable with myself. I learned that "sick" children that are dependent on wheelchairs and traches are more alive than some perfectly able adults I have met. I learned that if you give back a little, you will gain A LOT from it and I learned that I can be a good person regardless of what society tries to shape us to be. I am extremely grateful for having had that crush on that girl 11 years ago; without her, I would not have experienced the joy of VACC Camp, and much more importantly, I would not have learned to enjoy life, as much as our campers do when they are with us.

Janell Vazquez Falquez, PPCNP-BC
Volunteer 2002-2010
Medical Volunteer 2011-2012, 2016



VACC Camp has made a major impact on my life and career. I began as a volunteer at just 13 years old and knew I had a passion for nursing. I became particularly close with Elliott and his family and because of them, I was able to learn how to feed him via g-tube, how to suction his trach, and what to do in the case of an emergency by showing me how to use the ambu-bag. All those skills one learns in nursing school, and I was able to learn and practice them every year during camp. I have been a teen volunteer and have served as a volunteer Registered Nurse and now I am a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. I am forever grateful to Dr. Simpser, VACC Camp, and all the campers and their families for the joy and success they have brought to my life. My life has never been the same since my first year at camp and I know I will continue volunteering for many years to come!

Jaquelyn Garcia
Volunteer 2011-present



VACC Camp has been such a life changing experience. I started the camp 5 years ago and continue to come back because of its amazing ability to put a smile on my face. My first year of camp, I was paired up with a little girl from Venezuela named Mariana, and every year she runs into my arms on the first day of camp. I look forward to that first day and all the days after in that week. I have been able to see her grow from a shy little girl who wouldn't let go of her mom to the energetic little social butterfly.

Jazlyn Merida
Volunteer 2013-2015, 2017



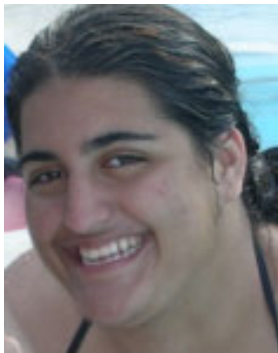
Volunteering at VACC Camp has been the best decision I've ever made. Through camp I have learned to be a more patient, compassionate, humble and optimistic person. Camp has also given me the opportunity to meet some of the most amazing people who have changed my perspective on life. I am very grateful to be able to be a part of VACC Camp!

Jennifer Perez
Volunteer 2014-2015



When presented with the opportunity to volunteer at a camp for a week the first thought that usually comes into someone's mind is "yay volunteer hours" but from the moment you start to experience what VACC camp truly is, getting volunteer hours becomes insignificant. VACC camp has truly changed my life, from seeing the joy that camp brings to these children to making amazing friendships with the campers and their families. Camp provides an escape for these children in which their disability is no longer something that stands in the way of what they want to do. At camp all dreams come true and everyone is equal, we are not campers, volunteers and staff but instead we are all one big group coming together to make a difference. The children that come to camp, despite all the difficulties they have encountered in life, are the happiest people I have ever met and I feel so lucky to be able to share that happiness with them during the best week of the year: VACC camp week.

Jennifer Ramos, Esq.
Volunteer 2003-2006



When Bela asked me to write something for a book commemorating VACC Camp’s 30th anniversary, I found it difficult to think of only a few words to describe the incredible impact this organization has had on my life. Camp helped shape me into the person I am today by teaching me what it means to preserve, live life to the fullest, and be a true friend. It taught me how important it is to always try to be a better person, lead by example, and to think about how the world we live in can be made better and accessible to all. It taught me to never judge a book by its cover and always believe anything is possible regardless of what I may mistakenly believe is a limitation. It reminded me that fun can—and should—be had at every age. Most importantly, it taught me that one of life’s greatest gifts is the smile of a child who you have just made laugh. VACC Camp is a place where people can come together and for one week every year remember the sky is the limit and that together we can do anything. Though I may no longer live in Miami or continue to experience the amazingness of Camp, its legacy will forever be a part of me.

Jesse Peinado
Volunteer 2012-2014



VACC Camp has done so much for me. Going into camp I had no idea the experience was going to be a life changing experience. To make this camp possible for the kids is great. Thanks to Dr. Simpser, Bela, the nurses, and the rest of the staff to make this camp possible. I was a volunteer for 3 years and I loved every minute of it. To meet the campers and to do everything possible to make them happy and have fun is an amazing feeling. Seeing the campers do activities that I thought wouldn’t be possible such as go to the beach, pool, and bowling shows me nothing is impossible. I still keep in contact with campers to catch up with them. I loved every experience of camp and helping an amazing organization.

For the kids,
Jesse Peinado

Jessica Aviles
Volunteer 2016, 2017



Words cannot describe my first year at VACC Camp. Being able to spend time with these beautiful, wonderful children made me feel amazing, and like I was making a real difference in the world. As a person, it made me change for the better. Going on the fun field trips, like bowling and Bayside, I felt part of a family that I knew I’d never forget. VACC Camp has changed me in many positive ways, and I’ll definitely come back.

Jessica Cruz
Volunteer 2016, 2017



Wow! I find it extremely hard to put into words how rewarding and what a life changing experience it was to be a new volunteer at the VACC Camp during their 30th anniversary. It was inspiring to witness how campers, staff and volunteers become family in such a short period of time. This opportunity has changed my perspective on life in so many ways. Love, respect, admiration, perseverance and inspiration are some of the words that come to mind when I think about the camp. It was a blessing, an honor and an absolute privilege to be part of this program. I cherish the everlasting memories I shared with the campers and can affirm without any hesitation, that I will be a part of the VACC family for many years to come!

Jevon Brown
Volunteer 2016, 2017



What VAAC Camp has done for me is none other than open so many doors to meet amazing people along with helping me finding a new career path. I can honestly say that VACC camp has had a huge impact in my life in so many ways; it's showed me how to show compassion and how to empathize with people no matter their situation or circumstance. This makes me want to continue to serve and mentor the campers for many years to come. VACC camp was such an incredible experience and it will always hold a special place in my heart. –

Jonathan Yap
Volunteer 2012-13, 2016-17



Between all of the experiences I had and all the people I met there's no doubt that it has shaped me into who I am today. I met some of the most important people in my life today from camp, including Cory and his family, who've been amazing friends to me and I keep in constant contact with them outside of camp. But the most important thing about camp is that no matter how much of an impact it has on us volunteers, it can never compare to what it does for the campers themselves.

Johanna Sanchez-Melcon
Volunteer 1998-2000, 2006



Freshman year of 1998 was the first year I had the pleasure of participating in this great annual event. What initially started as a project to complete community service hours, turned into something much more meaningful. The joy the children that come to this camp have is magical, and it makes you realize just how much one takes for granted in life. Their joy was so contagious that I loved going back, year after year, until I realized I was an adult and had to give future teenagers the opportunity to share in this amazing experience. Even to this day I have fond memories and lasting friendships that I will always keep near and dear.

Captain Joseph "Joey" Hoffer
VACC Camp volunteer 2000-2003



Fifteen years ago I became a part of the wackiest, craziest, silliest, and most fun camp in the world. The camp orientation prepared me for everything but that! For Teen Pals, the schedule offered going to either morning or afternoon activities; I checked both and also requested a bunk for the night (which I didn't get). The hardest part was leaving each night, but VACC Camp made sure we all went to bed exhausted. Every minute of camp was full of laughter, and there was never enough time in the day. I truly can't pick my favorite activity at VACC Camp. I think the logo, two smiling balloons floating off together, sums it up mostly. Happily we floated together through each event: sailing, karaoke, face painting, shows, swimming, beach visits, boat tours, carnivals, Hawaiian luaus, bowling, and more topped off with a party every night. Anything was possible and we learned to overcome any limitation. By the end of the week we were no longer Teen Pals and Campers, we were best friends and one big family. That family grows every year. I thank everyone who is part of VACC Camp for making it such a special place.

Joshua Miller
Volunteer 2003-2006



There are things that take place in one’s life that forever leave an imprint on their heart and soul; that’s what VACC Camp did for me. I’m sure many will agree, but when I first became a part of the family I thought I would be serving others, when in turn these amazing and beautiful individuals served an even bigger purpose in my life. I can’t explain how grateful I am for Peter and Chris and how blessed I was getting to have them be my buddies at Camp. The toughest part at Camp was saying I’ll see you next year as they begged us to not leave. I will never forget the bonds created, the friends made, and the life long memories I will forever cherish.

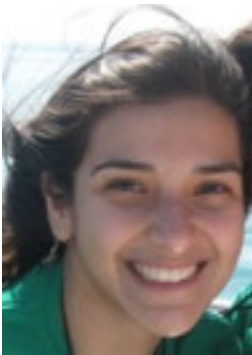
VACC Camp will always be a part of who I am wherever I go. Thank you VACC Camp

Julio Zevallos
Volunteer 2013-2016



VACC Camp has changed my life in a way I truly never expected. Meeting all the wonderful people and doing all these wonderful events to bring smiles to the campers are the reasons I look forward to the camp each year. The camp has truly changed my perspective on people for the better, and campers continue to impress me year after year on how wonderful they are.

Karen Cabezas, RN
Volunteer 2005 – present
Volunteer team leader 2007-2013
Volunteer registered nurse 2014-present



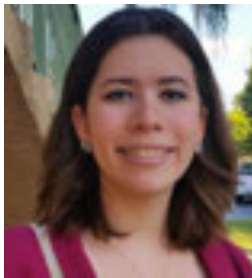
At 14 years old VACC Camp taught me that dreams were possible despite health barriers and physical ability. Now at 26 years old I’m proud to say my lifelong dream came true, I’m a registered nurse. VACC Camp is the happiest place in the world, making dreams come true to not only campers and their families but to young volunteers who just need that one little push.

Karla Valdivia
Volunteer 2016-2017



“When I think of camp? I think of the word ‘Family’ as a warm feeling encases my being and a smile escapes my face. I found a sense of peace and happiness whenever I surrounded myself in that environment and saw the smiling faces everyone portrayed. I found a new family when I first stepped into that camp not knowing what to expect as I felt a rush of adrenaline and excitement come to me. I found family everywhere I turned, from campers and their families, to volunteers, and the staff. Every single person in this community has inspired and impacted me in such an amazing way. Whenever I was in that camp I forgot simple problems existing in my life because the people there reminded me life had given me what others wished for and I learned to cherish it greatly. VACC camp means everything to me despite the short amount of time I’ve been there. It reminds me of happiness and positivity. Something everyone should have even when life appears stormy and grey because afterwards a rainbow will appear to clear up and brighten a day.”

Kathleen Mato
Volunteer 2016-2017



When I first step foot into Vacc Camp I didn't know what to expect but I loved the camp and I made some memories and friendships there. I found out about the camp from my nurse, I researched the camp and immediately sent my application! I thank Bela for giving me the opportunity to join the camp. Making a change in the world and working with kid's showing them that they have a friend to make them smile and be by their side in their time of need. I enjoy volunteering and seeing the love and family in this camp, everyone is so connected. I had the opportunity to be with my camper Meredith and her family. Meredith is a little ball of sunshine she's always running around, always smiling, she has so much energy, her family is really supportive and kind, I'm glad I spent time with them. I'm passionate about this program because it really impacts the community as a whole especially the kids.

Kayla Appleby
Volunteer 2015-present
Volunteer team leader 2017



VACC Camp has completely changed my heart. I was so blessed to be a part of this experience. These kids and teens have truly made me a better person. I look at life a little differently now and learned to appreciate everything I may have taken for granted because one day it can be snatched from under me in the blink of an eye. VACC Camp is my second family and I can't wait for the next year to be a part of this family once again.

Kevin Maestre
Volunteer 2009-2013, 2015- present
Volunteer team leader 2010-2013, 2016



Here I am, 7 days in, and about 100 hours spent at a camp site. Why is it that I'm crying? And why can't I stop? Just the sight of these campers, and all that comes to me is tears? I can't believe it. I don't understand why, I'm in tears, and they are just smiling as if they are a lot wiser than I. I feel the tear drops running down my face; warm, controlled by the same force that is pulling me down. I felt that the time I spent at camp was as quick and abrupt as the tear drop running down my face. I was utterly disconcerted, I couldn't understand how a young man as myself felt so much; when usually my emotions are never truly expressed... I can't believe that such a small experience made me like this.

Initially just a task for my community service hours I needed; this camper, excuse me: my close friend; ended up being someone I now look up to and trust. Till this day; I've never connected so well with any other person as I have with a camper. I rarely trust anyone with important things, but just on the first day of meeting him, we connected as if I was meeting my brother after a year of being away from me. Immediately, all these secrets and life experiences were being exchanged and amazing things about him astonished me; it seemed like we weren't so different after all. I hear from afar – "everyone, Cory is leaving." And now it's time for our goodbyes. How could I say goodbye to him, and tell him at the same time that I couldn't wait till next year? Do I say "I'll text you"? or "we'll chat on Facebook"?

At a loss words, I stood affront of the van carelessly waiting to figure out the words to say all while in awe and in tears as he was being placed in his van.

And just as I was about to open my mouth for my goodbye, he told me "I'll see you soon, Kevin!" And I couldn't even say a thing as I nodded my head. Because to him it was an assurance that I was still going to be there for him; because that's what a 7 days, 100 hours did to us. It built a bond that even words couldn't describe. As I stood there, waving, as the sound of the van's engine disappeared down the narrow road; it brought me back to reality that I have to appreciate everything life offers. That regardless of the situation I am placed in; enjoying the moments and the people around you is what is important. I realized then that VACC Camp is more than just 7 days; but a lifetime of friendship and growth.

Kimberly Smith
Volunteer 2015-present



"When I first signed up for VACC Camp, I had no idea that I would be receiving one of the most memorable experiences of my life. The campers were amazing to be around. Their beautiful and radiant smiles made waking up every morning worth it. The silly moments, laughter, bond and warm comforting hugs we shared, I will forever cherish. #VACCCampForever"

Larry Plaza
Volunteer 2009-present
Volunteer team leader 2011-2016



What VACC Camp has done for me is it has taught me how truly transient life can be. No matter how many obstacles we encounter throughout our lives, we as a society, need to put in the effort to collaborate on living every aspect of our lives to the maximum of our abilities. More specifically, the campers themselves have taught me that you can only be one thing if you want genuine relationships amongst family and friends; yourself.

Linda Padilla
Volunteer 2006-2008, 2010-2013



I began VACC Camp in 2006 at the age of fourteen. At such a young age, I was unsure as to what I should expect. Surely, I attended the orientation and meetings all the volunteers had to attend in preparation for camp. However, I was still hesitant about what to expect from VACC Camp as it was my first time being surrounded by children who were ventilated assisted. Following my first day at camp, I was completely immersed in everything camp had to offer. I immediately made friends with individuals I still speak with to this day and fell completely in love with what VACC Camp stood for. I continued camp the following years up until I was in college, and every year VACC Camp never ceased to fulfill my expectations. I continuously met people who changed my complete outlook and perspective on life. The memories and friendships I made during my time in VACC Camp have changed me as a person and for that I am grateful. Thank you VACC Camp for making this one week in a year an event so many individuals look forward to and such a life changing experience for many of us, myself included.

Liseth Perez-Sanchez
Volunteer 2014 - 2015



VACC Camp is a life-altering experience. You hear this a lot but it is not until you experience it, that you fully understand. I initially did VACC Camp for the kids, but honestly the camp was just as beneficial to me. The campers despite what life has thrown their way, manage to be optimistic and smile, I learned so much from them. Each and everyone one of the campers is special, and I have memories that I will cherish forever. VACC Camp will forever be an important part of my life.

Lorgeleys Llaguno
Volunteer 2016-2017



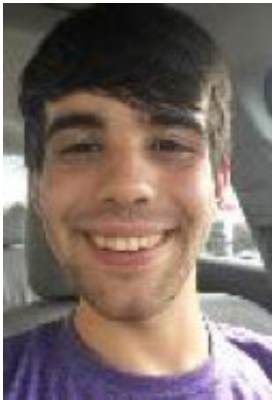
I can honestly say that VACC camp has been the highlight of my year, with all the amazing people and unique experiences not found anywhere else comes much engagement and insight that will be taken into account in my future. What I've learned from the camp is honestly beyond words to me, VACC camp has contributed incredible experiences, as well as driven and advanced my dear passion for nurture and medicine. With all the once in a lifetime opportunities, it's hard to specify what EXACTLY VACC contributed but one thing I can say is how much the camp and all the people have meant to me. VACC camp means a great deal to me and will never be forgotten; the campers and volunteers will always have a major place in my heart. The whole concept of VACC camp really touches and captivates me in the sense how I'm able to aid and watch a child while they adventure and conquer the world with their disability, which only makes them vigorous and spirited, and watch them flourish and grow; I love how I'm able to help others all while making long-lasting friendships and learning about my future career. As previously stated, VACC camp provided to me once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and memories that will never be omitted, but will be cherished and a never-ending inspiration to me. VACC camp has more value to me than just hours that are provided, all the tired mornings and exhausted evenings didn't even mean anything to me, what meant the most was the campers and their family as I developed a yearning love and adoration for them and everything else just came with the package. I love VACC camp and what it stands for, I see that it empowers and strengthens the campers to not be afraid of the world and their prosperity and happiness transfers to volunteers and makes the uplifting atmosphere of VACC camp, without the campers there would never be a VACC camp. I endlessly love VACC camp, campers, and volunteers and I would never trade the experiences and memories for the world, thank you to everyone for allowing me this experience and infatuation that will help me become a better person and allowing to give back to others. I've learned the concept of diligence, nurture, enlightenment, and drive while volunteering at the camp, it truly means a lot to me and even though I've only volunteered one year, so far, I have completely fallen in love with this amazing camp and I can't wait for the future.

Luis Prieto
Volunteer



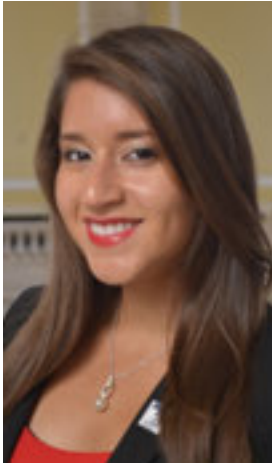
I love to run, jump and play,
But I want to be like them for a day.
You don't live life till you meet kids like this;
If I was a genie I would grant their one wish.
I hope I've made a difference in their life;
It will be one great story to tell my wife.
I can't wait till next time comes around;
It is then that my heart will be found.
I smile all week and at the end I cry.
I hate the end ---- I hate good-bye
I try to stay positive and say there is always next year.
But you guys give me comfort, so I am far from fear.
I realized you kids are so cool,
From the very first time Stephonne jumped in the pool.
You guys love life just as I do,
I just didn't realize what I had till I met you.
This I will tell you is straight from the heart;
So you guys have something to remember when we are far apart....
Cherish life and don't ever think
That someone is better than you.

Marcos Bengochea
Volunteer 2015 – present
Volunteer team leader 2017



When I first heard about VACC camp, all I thought about was, how difficult it was going to be giving up my entire spring break; and when I say ENTIRE spring break I mean it. And as VACC Camp got closer I got more nervous. I had no idea how I was going to connect with people who were so different than me. But before I knew it VACC Camp had arrived, and I found myself drawing with chalk on the floor, to be honest I felt kind of childish and had no idea what VACC Camp had in store for me. But as the day progressed and the campers arrived I quickly realized that I had worried for no reason! And after an entire week with such amazing people (Campers, Family's, Staff, and volunteers) I knew that I would be returning to VACC camp every year! The memories and friendships that I made that week are not only unique, but irreplaceable and magical!

Maria Alejandra Moscoso
Volunteer 2010-2012



VACC Camp was much more than a community service project; it was and still is my family. It was over eight years ago that I learned about VACC Camp and what first started as a fun adventure during my High School sophomore Spring Break became an annual tradition with lifelong friendships. I look back now and realize how much I grew up with my VACC Camp family. I laughed, cried, and danced with this family each year, but always left it with a heavy heart and a renewed promise to come back the next year and do it all over again. My friend, camper, and now self-proclaimed sister, Annelise Trapp and I still talk almost every day about anything and everything that is happening in our lives no matter what part of the world we are located in, yet she always finds a way to remind me that she can always come find me and run me over with her chair if she felt like it. I learned to be resilient, dedicated, but most importantly grateful through the examples I saw each and every day in camp. Every year created a new memory and friendship for me, and I am eternally thankful for having had the opportunity to join the VACC Camp family for so many years. I hope that in the future, I may be able to relive many of the memories I created over the years here and that I may even have the opportunity to share it with my own future family one day as well. Thank you VACC Camp family for changing my life for the better.

Maria Rodriguez
Volunteer 2010-11, 2013-14



VACC Camp changed my life. It has taught me countless lessons and showed me a different and brighter perspective of life. Often times, we get caught up in our own lives and lose sight of what is truly important. VACC Camp has been my anchor. It has helped me grow as a person and shaped me into the individual I am today. Being part of VACC Camp fulfills me in a unique way. It introduced me to inspiring individuals and life experiences. It is a priceless experience I am blessed with and I am forever grateful to be a part of VACC Camp.

Mariajose Salamanca
Volunteer 2012-present
Volunteer team leader 2013- present



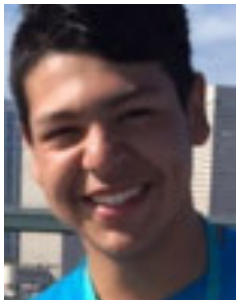
VACC camp has taught me more than I could ever put in words and has been my driving force in pursuing a career in the health industry. I have learned invaluable communication skills, patience, and most importantly, the appreciation for things most of us take for granted. VACC camp is the one-week I look forward to the most throughout the year, and although it's a very demanding week, the smile on our campers' faces and their families' is worth every minute.

Marta Elena C. Parekh
Volunteer 2004-2014, 2016



In 2004, when I was a Sophomore in high school, I remember being really excited to hear about this camp. Along with my excitement, I felt lots of butterflies in my stomach...those you get when you are about to start a wonderful but perhaps challenging phase in your life. Back then, I had no idea how amazing this camp would be. I can now wholeheartedly say that it has completely shaped me in both the professional and personal realms. I am a Speech and Language Pathologist because these children taught me the beauty of communication through any and all means. A smile means so much more to me now, than it did 12 years ago...
The families- whether it's the children, siblings, parents, grandparents...you name it!- amaze me each and every year. Their thirst for life and ability to find pure joy in the little things is truly admirable. They definitely are an example to follow. This camp offers a life-changing experience for campers and volunteers alike. Year after year, it grows a little more, touching more and more lives. It is a privilege to be able to serve the families and share precious memories with them as they cruise through camp and discover all the fun activities they are able to partake in despite challenges. I'm infinitely grateful for the opportunity to continue to participate. Dr. Simpser, Bela, Rose Ann, Ivette...and all the rest of the medical/support staff, VACC Camp is not just a camp, it's a beautiful gem!
Happy 30th Birthday VACC Camp family!!

Marvin Deleon
Volunteer 2016



VACC Camp has had a great impact on my life. Words cannot describe how great of a feeling it was to see everyone happy, especially the campers and their families for the whole week of it. For most teenagers spring break means going to parties and the beach with friends, but for me spring break means time for VACC Camp, time to see some of the many great friends I have made and time to see how happy everyone gets. VACC Camp is truly inspiring to everyone, it changes how a person can view things in a positive way. VACC Camp is amazing!

Maya Lowe
Volunteer 2014- 2016
Volunteer leader 2015-2016



To me, VACC Camp is a place where no matter your age, physical ability or health condition, you are a kid again. I look forward to coming to camp every year and working as hard as possible to make the campers' week amazing. I can't imagine spending those 7 days in March doing anything else.

Melina Sadeghi
Volunteer 2012-present
Volunteer team leader 2013-2016



Melina sent her team leader friend Alyssa her college essay to read and Alyssa shared it with us.

We shorten words to save time, elongate words to give emphasis, and try so hard not to go over 500 words on a college essay. But little did I know, there were absolutely no words needed to change my life. It is the most extraordinary feeling in the entire world to love someone so much, that you find a part of yourself in them. It is even more extraordinary to be able to communicate with someone without using words, and still feel so close to them. Growing up with strict traditional parents, I never had time to find myself. I hoped to find passion and talent in something like dance, art, or music, but I was never given the opportunity. In just one day, I found myself just when I thought I had given up looking. It was a bright and sunny day in Bayside, but not surprising for Miami weather, it quickly changed into a rain storm. I was wheeling Josh carefully, keeping my grip tight so I wouldn't let go and risk him slipping. We reached the point of no shelter, and as I prepared to wheel him he moved his body back and forth signaling to me to stop. I figured he did not want to get wet, but looking closer I realized he was pointing to his hand. Josh did not want the rain to ruin his freshly painted henna tattoo- he got one every year at camp as a tradition. Immediately, I took off my sweater and put it over him. With one hand, I wheeled him back to the buses, and with the other, I protected his tattoo. When we finally arrived to the buses and it was time to return to the camp grounds, Josh was ecstatic that his tattoo was not ruined. I kissed his cheeks that were spread wide open from the huge smile on his face, and he hummed "I love you." I grabbed his hands, squeezed them, and replied "I love you more." Josh cannot speak, and so the differently pitched sounds he made would not have made sense to anyone but me. Josh knew I understood him, and I knew he understood me. The feelings I experienced on that rainy day are too surreal to describe. In that moment, I felt a part of something bigger, I felt like I belonged somewhere, and I finally felt like I had found myself. To give my week with my best friend the title of "service" feels extremely demeaning. When I right click on "service" on Microsoft Word, the term "repair" is the first to show up as a synonym. Josh was not broken, and he had absolutely nothing that needed to be repaired. In fact, my week with him, and the moment we shared together at Bayside repaired me.

VACC Camp has completely changed my life in the most amazing way possible. It has given me friendships, a place where I can be myself, and most importantly- a family. I carry this camp in my heart every single day.

Melissa Diaz
Volunteer 2001-2008



When I was asked to write about my experience at VACC Camp I could not help but think of anything but pure love and joy. I was lucky enough to be a volunteer for several years and not only gained life-long friendships, but I also developed an amazing appreciation for life. By creating this amazing camp, families of children who normally spend their days in and out of hospitals have been able to participate in activities that give them a sense of normalcy. Dr. Simpser has been able to bring joy to these kids and go above and beyond in every way possible. I clearly remember his willingness and determination when it came to giving these kids a chance. A chance to live and enjoy simple things in life like going to the beach and dancing. My personal journey as a volunteer has shaped the woman I am today. I see my own children and always remember to embrace every precious second that we have with each other. I remember the memories I made with the campers with a smile and cannot imagine what my teen age years would have been like without VACC Camp. I hope to one day see my own children participate and volunteer as well. The best part of all is that as a volunteer you would think that I was giving more to those kids than they were giving to me. However, every second I spent with them filled me up with endless love. They gave me more than I could ever give them. I am so grateful to this amazing organization for continuing to help families and show the world that love and hope can move mountains. Thank you Dr. Simpser!

Mia Juliet Caban
Volunteer 2015



The ability to give, share, and be fulfilled in the utmost unselfish way is what VACC Camp means to me. I am looking forward to my second year as a volunteer. The campers are kind and fun-loving children. The world could learn a lot from them.

Michael Mieh
Volunteer at camp 2009-present
Volunteer Golf organizer 2010-present
Volunteer operation staff 2016 to present



The first time I heard about VACC camp, I thought it would be something I would help out one time and then it would be over. Almost 8 years later, every time I hear the name VACC camp I feel I am part of a team made up of amazing, caring, loving individuals that unselfishly give of themselves each and every year to ensure that kids and parents who attend this camp for a brief period in their life enjoy daily activities like so many others that may take it for granted.

One cannot say VACC camp without saying the name of Dr. Moises Simpser. This incredible, compassionate man has been an inspiration and the driving force of this camp. To have been able to meet and work alongside this incredible man has been a once in a lifetime experience.

Each year no matter how short of time I am, or how tired I might be I drive to the camp site knowing that what we do together touches these families' lives and that is worth more than all the riches in life.

To meVACC camp = Volunteers Assisting Children's Comfort

Michelle Moreno
Volunteer 1995-1998



VACC Camp is a wonderful camp where children can forget about their condition, be a kid, and discover that they are not alone. Also, this magical time allows parents to relax and relate to others who are going through the same exact thing. I was very fortunate to be a part of this wonderful experience during my high school years and a few years after in the capacity of volunteer. Throughout the years, I even brought along my friends and fellow theater performers to join in on this wonderful experience. One of my most cherished memories was being able to get my theater troupe involved in doing some improvisational activities with the campers, parents, and volunteers during one of the activity nights at camp. Dr. Simpser gave me the thumbs up to do the same thing (though it was unpolished at the time compared to my work today) because he simply saw the benefits of such interaction with the campers brought on during that evening. I want to thank Dr. Simpser for seeing the potential in what I did because it gave me the necessary confidence to pursue a career as a drama therapist, as I am currently training to be a registered drama therapist through Nova Southeastern University. Just as Dr. Simpser took a chance with my work at the time, he openly invites those with the objective to bring joy into the lives of campers and family members to share their efforts and talents at VACC Camp. Here's to many more years of bringing joy and great times at VACC Camp!

Mina Cash
Volunteer 2016-2017



VACC Camp gave me friends and created bonds with people who are amazing. Taught me many things from the equipment to even just washing the dishes and cleaning the kitchen. It was the best spring break ever and I'm definitely going to volunteer next year.

Miranda Perez
Volunteer 2014-present



VACC Camp has influenced my life in so many ways. Every time I am at VACC camp I can't help but wonder how anyone could want to be anywhere else but here. It is truly a blessing.

Natalie Asorey
Volunteer 2007-2012
Volunteer team leader 2009-2010



I'll never forget the first time I helped Salome breathe. I was 14; she was in her early 20s. It was chaotic, as beach day always is, but I focused on counting – one, two, three, squeeze. I was scared and she calmed me down. With every squeeze of the ambu bag, every breath of air she received, we became stronger. I became stronger. I'll never forget learning to talk to Salome. Day one I'd learned all her facial signals: yes, no, suction. She helped me learn. Sometimes I couldn't figure out the words, so I'd guess, and when that didn't work, we'd run through the alphabet so I could spell the word. She was so patient with me and I with her. I became more grateful. I'll never forget how Mama Debbie, Salome's mom, entrusted me with her. Mama Debbie would tell the nurses that we knew Salome best – to follow our lead. She brought me in. She called me her daughter. I became part of their family. VACC Camp was a family. It was my family. I wouldn't change the weeks I spent volunteering there, the love, the tears, the happiness – I wouldn't change that for the world.

Nicholas Prieto
Volunteer 2007-2011
Volunteer team leader 2009-2010



VACC camp has been the most influential experience I have ever had the pleasure of being a part of. From day one, the children and families welcomed volunteers like myself with open arms and allowed lifelong friendships to form. Having had the opportunity to volunteer year after year, camp has continued to have a positive impact on my life decisions. My uplifting experiences with the campers was the leading factor in my decision to pursue a career in Clinical Social Work, to continue to be part of a support system for children and families. VACC camp has been an invaluable experience, and one that I will always cherish.

Nicole Umpierre
Volunteer 2005 to 2016
Team leader 2011 to 2016



VACC Camp has been a huge part of my life for the past 10 years. It's brought me joy and life-long friends. The best thing about camp is how these kids are always so happy despite leading difficult lives but seem to never let it bring them down. Because of them I learned I shouldn't sweat the small stuff, have fun and most importantly SMILE.

Nicole Martinez
Rose Ann's Great Granddaughter



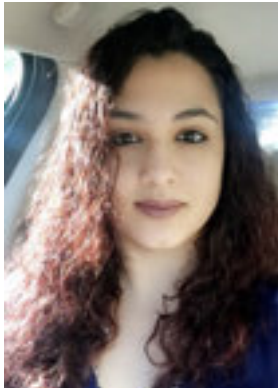
VACC Camp is important to me because it helps me learn to help other kids that can't do things that other kids and adults can do. It has inspired me to help and care for other kids in need. I am really glad that VACC Camp is here for them because without it they would not be able to do the things that VACC Camp does for them. Like the swing, the beach, getting in the ocean, go sailing and going on big boats. I think that they really try hard to do what we do and I am really glad that this camp has been there for them. I learned that they are really nice and caring people.

Olivia Etienne
Volunteer 2014-present
Volunteer team leader 2015-2016



My first year as a VACC Camp volunteer was extraordinary. They had installed a wheelchair swing and many children got feel a sensation they've never felt before. When I saw Joshua ride that swing and his face light up I knew this place was magical. But these extraordinary things happened every day, every year at this camp. Bowling, going to the beach, and being surrounded by volunteers who become their best friends is only part of the reason why VACC camp is extraordinary.

Patricia Delguys
Volunteer 2011 – present
Volunteer Team Leader 2017...



Let me tell you about my home away from home. Founded by one great human being, Dr. Simpser and coordinated by another great human being Bela Florentin. I didn't know what value and life meant until spring break of 2011. I have experienced 6 years of every rush of emotion since I volunteered at VACC CAMP. I have gained a family since VACC camp and I have never seen life the same way. I believe in true miracles, witnessing the smiles, the tears, the humbleness and the effort that the campers put into their everyday life just to be happy. And being able to be a part of why they smile, why they make the worst situations into the most positive situations is just one true feeling, lucky. VACC camp has my heart and it has been a privilege to have been able to be a part of something so life changing and important.

Patricia Marrero
Volunteer 2013-2016



Any adjective I would use to describe my years at VACC Camp all would be an understatement. This camp has changed my life and hopefully continues to inspire others as well.

Priscilla Farrell
Volunteer 2004-present
Volunteer team leader 2009-present



I have been going to VACC camp since I can remember. In the beginning I was a granddaughter to a staff member and as years went by I was able to start working as a volunteer. By that time I had already grown up with VACC camp and all the campers that come. It became a second family to me. I have developed such strong relationships with the campers, families and volunteers that I can't imagine my life without camp. I have learned so much, it really puts in perspective that life isn't only about material things or what you can do, but instead about who you share beautiful moments with regardless of their physical capabilities. VACC camp has challenged me and taught me to be a better me, to understand others and most importantly to have fun. I will always be grateful towards and love VACC camp forever.

Priscilla Quiros
Volunteer 2010-11, 2015-16



VACC camp is not a place for "you."
"You" gets lost, and now it's just "we" and "us." VACC camp teaches you that we are not alone in anything; there are others looking to join people like us. You come to camp as one person, but you leave camp with multiple friends and part of a forever family. I will forever be grateful for that, us, and our family

Rachel Echevarria
Volunteer 2011- 2016



VACC Camp started as an easy way for me to meet my high schools community service requirement and grew to become a part of me. My six years at VACC Camp have made me an ambitious leader, a more open minded person, a caring friend, an aspiring medical student and an overall better person. Through my time at camp I have met inspiring individuals in campers and volunteers alike, people who genuinely care for one another and come together for a life changing week full of smiles and adventure. VACC Camp taught me that there is no hurdle that can't be overcome, that there will always be someone there to lend a helping hand and that any opportunity can become a blessing.

Ralph Padierno
Volunteer 1998-2000, 2002-2006



VACC Camp to me was a place where I could make a difference in the lives of the kids and families that visited us year after year. VACC Camp showed me humility, compassion, responsibility and most of all it was part of my family and would always be for as long as I live. Through VACC Camp I made new friendships and met many wonderful families that I hold close to my heart. Seeing the happy faces of all our kids on a yearly basis was an event to look forward to every year. I thank all the families, volunteers, and staff, but most of all I thank Dr. Simpser for being a great mentor, a father figure who always gave good advice and most of all for having a heart of gold. Although I have not been back in a while I've been raising my daughter on the same principles I learned at VACC Camp and one day when she is of age she will follow in her father's footsteps and Volunteer at VACC Camp for years to come.

Rene Rivas
Volunteer 2016



My name is Rene Rivas; I'm just an ordinary guy, I may not be much, just a guy trying his best in school, just enjoying everyday life. But I had an enormous opportunity, to volunteer and help campers at the Nicklaus Children's Hospital- VACC Camp for spring break. It was an experience like nothing I ever had before, an experience I want to get again. Even though I had to wake up at five in the morning, coming home late, and even sometimes be exhausted, it never felt like a job. I was always having fun whether working with the crew, hanging out with my partners and of course playing with my camper. My camper was fun to be with, just the atmosphere he gave was always fun, cheerful, he always wanted to keep going, keep moving to the next thing to experience and enjoy. I remember the little dude making me chase him around camp, till he knew I couldn't catch him. He wouldn't let anyone beat him at anything, he made sure he was on top of the pack, and he was always the party animal in the bus. And I hope to have him again next year. Even though this camp is meant for the campers, I truly felt like we were campers too. From just playing soccer and water pong with each other to going to field trips like the one where we went to my first Kayak ride. I love helping out, I love just being there from the beginning on Set-Up Day. Just knowing I helped create a home away from home for these people, who live hard lives, and still keep on going. Just knowing that parents are happy seeing their kids smile, to see them swim or do other activities that many people doubt these kids can do, well they can, and they do here. I may have started doing this for community hours, but I'm thankful it went beyond that, I don't know where I'll be at in the future but I hope part of it will be there in VACC Camp. Thank you again for the opportunity to be in this wonderful Community service experience.

Ricky Martinez
Volunteer 2015-present



Volunteering at VACC Camp is an enlightening and an illuminating experience. It is truly a privilege to be considered part of a program that operates towards the sole purpose of making a positive impact. It has, and will keep on engraving the most inspiring messages and memories that will carry on forever.

Ruben Rueda
Volunteer 2007-present
Volunteer team leader 2009 to 2016



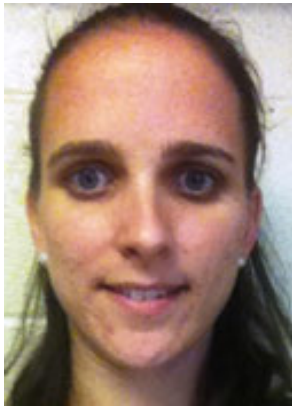
I never expected to be so deeply impacted by VACC Camp and the wonderful relationships that formed and blossomed there over the years. It has introduced me to some of the most inspirational, courageous, and beautiful people in my life.

Santiago Cortes
Volunteer 2011-2012



It is hard to narrow down the many different ways in which VACC Camp has added to my life. There were so many things that I learned about myself and others that have stayed with me until this day. Among them were lessons that were quite predictable when you are immersed in such a selfless and unique environment, such as how to be a leader or how to look past the machinery and medical rituals to see and interact with these campers who were kids much more like us than many would give them credit. Then, there were those lessons in life that just snuck up on you unexpectedly, like the true value of hope and a smile. Amanda is the one who taught me that. I did not know it when she was first paired with my team the first Spring Break that I volunteered at VACC Camp, but Amanda showed me just how much a smile could mean. Whether it was a simple one while we talked about her latest Harry Potter reference, or the one that stretched from ear to ear when Amanda and I danced by ourselves during a reception held for VACC Camp as her family and other members of the camp cheered us on, the possibility of granting her that smile taught me that oftentimes our own happiness comes from the happiness we are able to create in others. I looked forward to those times in which I could give her moments like that, and I can only hope that I was able to give as much as and more than Amanda has given me. I wish you only the best, Amanda.

Sarah Michelle Pastoriza, DO
Volunteer 2002-2005, 2014-present



VACC Camp, for me, started as a community service activity in high school. I started camp in 2001 and it grew into more than just community service but a passion and calling in life. Camp was something I'd try to clear my schedule for. As a high school student, who went to private school, my spring break never lined up with camp, however I tried to go as much as possible during that time. I had not been to camp for a few years while I went to college and started going back as a 3rd year medical student. VACC camp formed the basis for my essays of why I wanted to go to medical school and residency, and has continued in my passion to become a physiatrist. I have made amazing, lifelong friends. And it has been a great honor and pleasure to be part of the VACC camp family and to be able to come back every year to give as much as I can to the camp that fueled a large part of the passion I have as a physician.

Sena Tamaklo
Volunteer 2016



VACC Camp is about touching the life of a child and their family. Seeing the campers laugh, smile, and forget their worries is way better than anything I would have done during spring break.

Stephan Mercado, PT, DPT
Volunteer 2007-2012, 2016
Volunteer leader 2012



I was given the unique privilege of experiencing VACC Camp from 3 perspectives: sibling, volunteer, and volunteer leader. I've been involved with VACC Camp for 20 years, since I was 5 years old. My brother Chris Mercado was first a camper in 1995, and he looked forward to attending every year afterwards. VACC Camp provides campers and their respective families, the chance to experience things and activities in ways that might seem impossible on their own. I was given the opportunity at the age of 16 to become a volunteer and witness the other side of camp. I gained a new appreciation of VACC Camp, witnessing the countless hours that teen age/ young adult give up of their spring break to be at camp to be a blessing to these families. Even when I attended college in Orlando 4 hours away, where Spring Breaks did not coincide, I could not miss out on attending VACC Camp, that is the love and commitment that comes from the volunteers. And as volunteer leader, I learned how much structure was required to maintain the Camp. Much is done behind the scenes without notice, to make sure the camp runs smoothly, all for the families. When my brother Chris passed away in 2009, countless volunteers and staff came up to Lakeland to shower our family with love and support. I still attend camp to this day, in honor of Chris, to continue to be a blessing in other families' lives. VACC Camp becomes more than just a week long camp, it becomes a family.

Stephanie M. Sydnor
Volunteer 2009-2016
Volunteer team leader 2011-2016



VACC Camp has ultimately been the best decision I have made in my life. It has motivated me to advocate and raise awareness for children with tracheostomies and has inspired me to be that essential link that many children desire, a friend for life. VACC Camp in my eyes empowers individuals to create long lasting memories and a lifetime of bonds with amazing beings. Dr. Simpson challenges the teenage community to step out of their daily routine and embrace the lives of those who are nothing short of phenomenal. Camp changes your perspective on life and adds emphasis on conquering what many say cannot be done. That "can do" attitude is what allows the camper to build their confidence and what has encouraged me to help them reach their dreams and ambitions without hesitation. Campers aren't the only ones that grow with camp. We as volunteers grow with camp as friends, colleagues, professionals, and most importantly, as a family. I look forward to volunteering year after year just to have that time with my extended family. To this day, my excitement for camp is stronger than my first year and the love I have for it will never subside. VACC Camp has a special place in my life and a permanent place in my heart. VACC Camp! WOOT WOOT!

Susan Ambler
Volunteer 1998



At the age of 16, I fell in love for the first time. His character possessed all the qualities I had always looked for – a razor-sharp wit, a winning smile, and a warm, tender heart. He caught me off guard and stole my heart away. He was 7 years old and in a wheelchair and I was his camp counselor for a week. That week irreversibly altered my life. Although as his counselor I was supposed to teach him things, I believe Stephonne did most of the teaching. I learned more from him in a single week than years of school have ever taught me. He taught me that both love and sight come from the heart and that strength has nothing to do with muscles or even brainpower, but with a will to overcome all the unfairness that life dishes out.

Tatiana Pizonero Reyes
Volunteer 2002-2004, 2006
Volunteer team leader 2004



VACC Camp signifies hope... Everyone who shares in the experience is without a doubt, forever transformed. From the campers, to the volunteers, the staff to the strangers who witness the elation this camp brings to everyone's hearts. It encompasses the meaning of giving, life & love... It began as high school spring break volunteer hours for me & turned into something more meaningful than words could ever describe. The course of my life has been molded by my time spent sharing in such a beautiful celebration of the kindness & magical moments felt by all who come together to make this camp so very special. VACC Camp provides the happiest of memories by bringing out the best of what the human soul has to offer...

Teresa Cadavid
Volunteer 2015 to 2016



VACC Camp was undoubtedly the best week of my life. When it ended all I did was tell everyone around me about how awesome it was. All year I have been missing the joyous moments the campers, my fellow volunteers, and I shared together. The campers are the sweetest children you will ever meet, they filled my mornings with laughs that increased throughout the day. The numerous activities and trips we took made the experience even better; we got to do so many exciting things with amazing people. I am extremely glad I attended VACC Camp 2015, it changed my life and I will continue volunteering for as long as they allow me!

Vanessa Barquin
Volunteer 2008 – present
Volunteer Team Leader 2017



I have been a volunteer at VACC Camp every year for the past 8 years. Having the opportunity to participate in such a rewarding experience, has allowed me to grow professionally as a Child Life Specialist. It has also allowed me to practice more compassion towards children with a variety of medical challenges. It has been a pleasure to work with such incredible staff members and volunteers, who've allowed me to incorporate my own ideas and creativity into the program. I have truly enjoyed meeting all the wonderful children and families involved and look forward to many more years of camp.

Vanessa Gonzalez Retes
Volunteer 2001-2004, 2006-2013



If you've ever experienced a moment in your life when it felt so unreal; so ridiculously amazing that you can't even put it into words, then you'll be able to relate to what I'm about to say. I spent eleven Spring Breaks attending VACC Camp. I spent the rest of the year thinking and talking about it. Sometimes, becoming so overwhelmed in describing what it felt like to hang out with these children, that I couldn't figure out a way to express how important it was to me to be there year after year. In one word: Unforgettable!! I thank God for this experience as it taught me to be humble and appreciative of all the beautiful things life has to offer and introduced me to the most amazing human beings on this planet!

Virginia Perello
Volunteer 2008-2010
Volunteer Team leader 2009-2010



VACC camp changed my life, but most importantly it helped me uncover a sense of love and caring for others that I did not know I possessed. I worked as a team leader and helped new volunteers get acquainted with the special needs of the campers, who were mainly children depending on a ventilator. In addition to the leadership skills I gained during the camp. I learned how to feed a tracheotomy patient through a G-tube and to interact with children who suffer from any sort of mental or physical condition. In the end, this experience not only helped me realize how passionate I am towards the medical field, it also made me grateful for my health. Thus, I became aware of the idea that I came into this world for a reason, and if I am capable and enjoy science, I should do something about it. Therefore, I feel that if I do not take the lead and work to become a physician, my purpose in life and vision will never be attained.

Wendy Letterman
Volunteer 1995-2000
Volunteer Team leader(Senior Pal) 1998-2000



At the age of 14, I began volunteering with VACC Camp as a PAL. I was assigned to a camper named Susan Wilcox. She was 18, had spina bifida, a tracheotomy, and was confined to a wheelchair. Susan and I spent a wonderful week together learning how many similarities we shared and enjoying all the activities. Susan was hoping to return to VACC Camp the following year. A few weeks after camp, I was told that Susan had passed away. I was heart-broken. After the grieving process, I realized just how important VACC Camp is for the campers. They fight for their lives on a daily basis, not just medically but emotionally. Camp provides them the opportunity to be accepted, experience new firsts, and to make friends. I know that as a volunteer, I thought I would be helping the campers, but the campers helped me by teaching me the most important things about life.

To look at each day as a blessing.
It's okay to let others help you.
Enjoy the small accomplishments.
Smile and laugh uncontrollably.
The importance of family.

VACC Camp changes the lives of everyone involved, from the campers to the volunteers, from the medical staff to the Miami community. I don't know where I would be without my experiences at VACC Camp and I know others feel the same. My prayer is that VACC Camp will continue to thrive and impact the lives of children around the world. To those we have lost, your lives meant more than you know! We will never forget you. You live in our hearts every day!

Yainet Valle
Volunteer 2010 to present



Our perception of life is molded and shaped primarily by experiences. VACC Camp has defied social convention, surpassed all types of limitations, and continues to transcend above all stereotypes and stigmas. It has given me beautiful friendships, priceless memories, innumerable laughs, and most importantly it has given me the tools to look at life outside of the box. For me, VACC Camp isn't just something that I attend for one week out of the year, it is a culture and way of living that I embody every single day. I will forever be grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of VACC Camp.

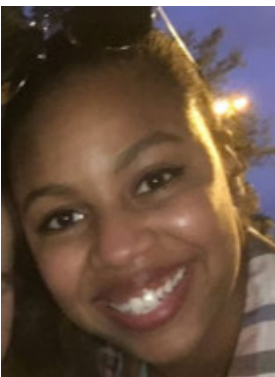
Yeremi Yero
Volunteer 2012-present



Choosing to apply to be a volunteer at VACC camp was the best decision I have ever made and I look back at that day all the time and smile. Since then I have come back for the past 6 years and have been provided with tons of unforgettable memories. Being able to be a part of something so amazing has changed the way I look at life and made me realize that I shouldn't take things for granted. The campers, volunteers, and team leaders I have had the pleasure to work with I not only consider my friends but a part of my family.

I anxiously anticipate the start of camp each year and the opportunity to continue to make wonderful memories and get to know such admirable people.

Zachyra Appleby
Volunteer 2009-present
Volunteer team leader 2012-2015



I started camp my junior year of high school. I was a 16 year old kid who needed community service hours and just happened to come across a flyer for this camp not knowing the impact it would have on my life. Being allowed to watch and help children do what before was thought to be impossible has made camp more than worth anything else I would have been doing during that week. I get asked all the time how I manage to volunteer year after year and I tell them every time that it's the happiness and joy of the children and families that keep me coming back. That is what camp is and why it means so much to me.

Volunteers

Others

Carol Montiel, RN, MS

What VACC Camp has meant to me!

Thirty one years ago a group of dedicated healthcare professionals and a few parents realized the need to create a place where families with children on ventilators could come and enjoy a "normal" camp experience. Homecare on ventilators was new and no one truly had all of the answers of how to cope with the child on the ventilator as well as the siblings who were not always recognized in this equation. I am proud to say that I was one of the original founders of VACC Camp and it has had a profound influence on me and my family. I "retired" from camp after serving as the official Camp Cook for 25 years, yet I remember the first years in which we were in tents and running the camp by the seat of our pants. Today it has developed into a well-oiled organization which provides a wonderful experience to its campers, siblings and parents alike. I have continued to care for ventilator dependent children and young adults at UCP's Golden Glades (formally Baby House.) It has been an honor to have served as one of the original creators and continuing supporter of this one of a kind camp for children and their families. It is my hope for the future that children will never need to have to be placed on a ventilator. However for the present, I hope to see VACC Camp set new boundaries and reach all of its goals.



Carol, Dr. Simpser and Bela



Carol with Linda McCutcheon, ARNP



Carol and Carmen Prieto at the VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration

Frank Marques

Actually, my time at VACC Camp began as a one-night Child-Life volunteer assignment in June 1988 (back then camp was held in late June), but grew into the long-term experience that I look back on today. I’ve seen camp grow, from its early years of asking for last-minute donations of supplies from local businesses, to the highly organized camp that it became. I’ve also seen the campers grow, many from children to teens and even young adults, some even returning to visit on their own, having become a part of mainstream life. VACC Camp is one of those life events that a person looks back on, but never says their time and efforts were wasted - in a world of many bad things, VACC Camp is an island of good.



Ivannia Van Arman

I initially became involved with VACC Camp at the request of my friend Mike Miehler, an avid and longtime VACC Camp volunteer and supporter. He asked me to help him plan the first golf tournament since I had previously coordinated several for our church. I agreed to help because Mike is my friend and has always helped and supported me; little did I know that I would grow to love this effort as much as I do today. Meeting Dr. Simpson, Mrs. Simpson and Bela Florentin was like meeting true soul-mates – people who work hard to do good deeds for others every day. I am especially inspired by VACC Camp for inviting international campers as I know medical resources are often limited in developing areas and children often suffer the consequences. I am a very proud mother of 4. I volunteer and serve others to teach my children to one day do the same.



Jorge Sanabria
MBFD413

For the past two decades my brothers and sisters from the Miami Beach Fire Department and I have had the honor of working with Dr. Simpser and the rest of the VACC Camp Staff. It is extremely difficult for me to put into words what the camp has meant to me. I am humbled and grateful for the chance to spend time with some of the most amazing kids I have ever met. My fellow firefighters and I are constantly reminded that we are public figures and that we are role models to the members of the community that we serve. The way I see it, the families of VACC Camp have shown me the true meaning of being a role model and how I should live my life. I want to congratulate VACC Camp on 30 years of great service and I look forward to the next 30.



Jorge with his fellow firefighters, Osvaldo Fernandez RT and camper Amanda Dinnigan in the beach chair.

Shara Waas and Therapy Dogs: Shadow, Sophie, Ace and Alfie

It has been my pleasure and honor to have participated in VACC camp with my Therapy Dogs, for the past 10 years. I feel blessed to have gotten to know Dr. Simpser, such an amazing and inspiring man, who's touched the lives of so many people.

Congratulations to Dr. Simpser and all of his dedicated volunteers, on the 30th Anniversary of VACC camp. It was a magical evening, quite a memorable celebration! As Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, so perfectly with Dr. Simpser in mind:

"That man is a success who has Lived Well, Laughed Often, Loved Much... Who looked for the best in others and gave the BEST he had."

Ever so fondly,
Shara Waas and therapy dogs Shadow, Sophie, Ace and now Alfie



Sophie



Shara with Alfie



Ace



Shara with Shadow



Shara at VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration

Mrs. Susan Yaskin
Retired 2013

Reflecting back on my teaching career as an Early Childhood Education teacher at Braddock Sr. High, so many exciting memories come to mind. As the Family, Career & Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and Future Educators of America (FEA) club sponsor, one of my greatest joys came from providing experiences for my students to know the importance of giving back to the community and specifically helping others who need help the most.

Back in the 90's, my students attended an assembly in the school auditorium which would change their lives forever as well as the students to follow year after year. Miami Children's Hospital, Dr. Moises Simpser, Director of Pulmonology and his staff presented an opportunity to spend the spring break week at A.D. Barnes Park for VACC Camp! The students would become a "buddy" to children who required breathing assistance, from all over the country and develop lifelong relationships with them. Students would also be part of the operation's staff and keep camp activities going throughout the day during meal times, field trips to Miami attractions and special event parties for the campers and their families.

Each year, veteran volunteers from my classes, who had already attended VACC Camp, helped me give class presentations to current students, recruiting them to become volunteers as well. Students would say "The best spring break ever", or "I waited for 51 weeks for this one week, to volunteer at VACC Camp" or they would say "This volunteer week was a life-changing experience". Whenever they spoke of VACC Camp, their faces lit up with excitement. Year after year, Braddock students would also be selected to a leadership role to become part of the staff, and carry on the camp traditions. I could not have been more proud.

Through FCCLA, students presented VACC Camp as their community service project and won gold medal honors at state and national competitions. They were so proud to tell everyone about VACC Camp!

Many students continued their commitment to VACC Camp by taking a week-long leave from college classes or their job to be a part of VACC Camp. VACC Camp became a permanent part of their lives and to this day, many are still actively involved.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to watch VACC Camp grow and to associate with the organizers.....Bela Florentin, Rose Ann Farrell, the nurses, the child life specialists and most importantly, Dr. Simpser, who had the vision and the dedication to create such an awesome program for these children and their families.

Thank you so much for the opportunities!!!



Nicklaus Children's Hospital



Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp

Medical Volunteers

Blanca Callejas, RN

Ten years ago I had the privilege to be invited to become a volunteer at VACC Camp. Little did I know what a wonderful experience this was going to be and how it would forever change my life. As a Nurse, I mostly see these children when they are ill and not feeling their best. VACC Camp has given me the opportunity to share time with these children in a totally different environment. I get to see them with huge smiles on their faces, laughing and spending quality time with the volunteers. I am lucky to be able to participate in such a wonderful event. Being part of VACC Camp has been a life changing experience for me. Through my volunteering I help provide the campers and their families a day of an amazing beach day, fun activities, but most importantly a day where they can forget about blood drawing, medical appointments and the other challenges they face daily. I absolutely love volunteering at VACC Camp. The most memorable experience for me at VACC Camp was when a Camper's mother and I bagged a camper from Miami Beach all the way to the campsite in the middle of rush hour due to a dead ventilator battery. Seeing the many patients of 3-East as well as the out of state Camper's enjoying themselves is extremely rewarding. One of the years I volunteered, celebrated my birthday at camp. Everyone sang happy birthday and I had a great time, as a birthday present, the campers gave a good soaking with a bucket of ice water. I really enjoyed that day and it was a blessing to be able to share it with everyone at VACC Camp. VACC Camp provides these kids and their families the opportunity to enjoy life at its best. I'm so glad that I am part of this amazing camp and look forward to volunteering every year. The experience has significantly changed my outlook on life. Thank you to the entire staff for providing me with the opportunity to help bring happiness to others.



Blanca Callejas, RN with
camper Stephanie Cortijo

Carla Prudencio
Pediatric Nurse

Hace 8 años, tuve la gran oportunidad de ser parte de la vida de familias y niños maravillosos que me enseñaron el valor de SER HUMANO, del amor, de compartir, de lo que es realmente importante y de ser feliz. Estas son lecciones de vida, que logre experimentar, gracias a Bela, al Dr. Simpson y a Ivette, que permitieron que yo, Carla Prudencio una enfermera Pediátrica de Argentina, pudiera ser parte de la historia de VACC Camp. Mi mente y corazón no olvidaran jamás esta historia que es parte de mi vida y me ayudo entender lo importante que es amar al prójimo y hacer feliz a nuestros niños del mundo.

Eight years ago I had the opportunity participate of the life of wonderful families and children which taught me the value of BEING HUMAN, of love, of sharing, of what is really important in life and how to be happy. These are life lessons that I was able to experience thanks to Bela, Dr. Simpson and Ivette, who allowed me, Carla Prudencio, a pediatric nurse from Argentina, to be part of VACC Camp's history. My mind and my heart will never forget this event which was a part of my life and helped me understand the importance of loving one another and making the world's children happy.



Carla with Dr. Moises Simpson



Carla with Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC

Carlos Gallostra, RRT

I met Dr. Simpson many years ago. He was a young physician, arrived at Miami with a beautiful family, and with a sincere desire to succeed as a Pulmonologist at Miami Children's Hospital. The first day, he came early to work, had no office space, nor a secretary, or an assigned telephone number. Dr. Mo needed help, and needed it pronto. So I shared my office with him, and he used my hospital extension, as well as my secretary as a receptionist until better arrangements could be made.

It was during these earlier times, when I realized that I was dealing with a true lover of medicine. I remember one day, after seeing a patient with very low economic resources that Dr. Simpson refused to accept any payment. Frankly, I was surprised, and I asked him why. His answer was short and to the point. "If I bill this patient, and the only money they have is for my fees, they will not have money for the medications. Then, I have not practiced medicine. "I knew I was dealing with a very special person. Time proved me right!

Dr. Simpson had a dream. To give respite to those families, who day by day, loved and cared for children with many difficult respiratory issues. Once a year, for one week, free of charge, provide meals, entertainment, and therapies to as many children as possible. Dr. Mo could not do it alone, so he started recruiting nurses, therapists, support personnel, and a team of volunteers blossomed. South Florida is known for its weather, balmy breezes, a protected bay, and sailing. Sailing? Are you nuts! How can you bring ventilator assisted children on sailboats? It was a dream, but dreams may become a reality, and Dr. Mo did not take a no for an answer.

Besides being a Registered Therapist, I had recently obtained my US Coast Guard captains license with sail endorsement. I was teaching sailing on Sundays, had fourteen sailboats available and with crews. Why not, let's do it.

I will never forget that Sunday, when the buses arrived to Shake A Leg, with families, children, ventilators, nurses, and volunteers. Everyone was ready, concerned. I was worried. Then the first sailboat left the dock, then the second, one more, until finally boat fourteen was off. The smiles of the children as the sailboats gently heeled, made the sun shine brighter, the wind milder, and the waves softer. It was one day that I will never forget. Thank you Dr. Simpson, for bringing hope, love, empathy to so many. Thank you for dreaming the VACC camp. Thank you for being my boss, my guide, but most important, my friend.



Carolina Vazquez RN

VACC Camp has been an important and very rewarding experience for me. At VACC Camp I had the opportunity to test the depth of my own commitment to the special need children. Working and at the same time having fun with this children taught me a very important lesson. Most of us take for granted the simplest things in life. The impact on me of achieving a valuable goal with the children, leaves me with something unique at the end of the camp.



Carolina Vazquez, RN with Angela Fernandez, RN

Dania Vazquez, ARNP, MSN

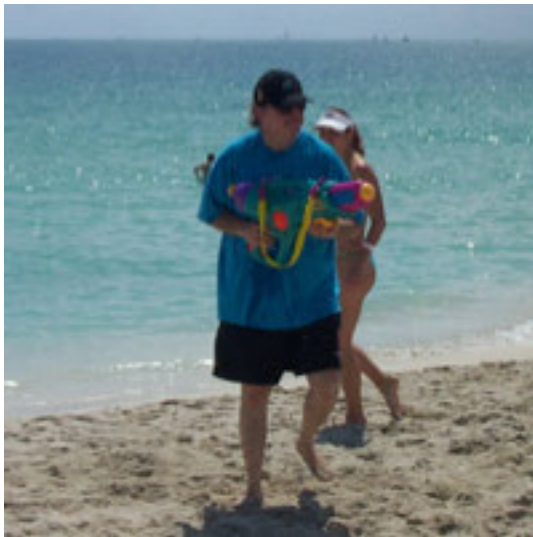
My first experience with VACC Camp was as a Nurse Practitioner in 2001 while working with the pulmonology physician practice at NCH. It was an amazing experience to work with such a dedicated team and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to provide care and help patients with complex medical problems and their families. VACC camp provides love and joy and special care for these campers and their families. I will always be grateful to Dr. Simpser, the staff, all the campers, their families and volunteers for the joy and professional opportunities in my life.



Dania with her daughter Janell at VACC Camp's 25th anniversary celebration



Dania Vazquez with her daughter Janell at camp





Francesca Blanchard, ARNP

This year will be my fifth year volunteering in VACC camp as a nurse. When I had first heard about the camp, I was automatically impressed and wanted to volunteer right away! When I actually had the opportunity to help out, I was automatically taken away at the activities planned for the campers, the other staff and volunteer's zeal, and most importantly the joy that this camp brings to the campers and their families. Some who never had the opportunity to dip their feet in the ocean or go on a boat and feel the waves, were given that opportunity. Parents and caregivers were given a time to go out and enjoy dinner as their children had a movie night under the stars. The smiles on their faces are priceless and the happiness it brings their families is as well. The campers and their families just get a time to be a family and not worry about their stresses. I have been privileged to meet a number of families and hear their stories and how VACC camp is so special to them. It is no surprise why they come back year after year for as long as they can. And as long as I am able to as well, I will continue to volunteer so I can help out, even if in small ways, so that this camp continues on!



Heather Silva, CCLS
Camp Child Life Specialist

It seems like yesterday, however; it's been 15 short years since I first volunteered at VACC Camp. In 2000, I had the privilege of beginning a journey that has continued over the years and has filled a very special place in my heart. I have met so many amazing children and their families. The challenges and obstacles that these families and children face on a daily basis are more than most of us see in a lifetime. For one week every year these amazing children and their families experience time playing together, having fun together and making friends that they see each year. There is an understanding and a bonding that we all have as a result of the time spent together each year. The lives of the children, families and volunteers are changed forever-for the better! Dr. Simpser, words are inadequate to express my gratitude for all that you do for these children and volunteers. When I'm asked to name one thing that has been a positive impact on my life, my response without reservation is always VACC camp. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to you Dr. Simpser, the parents and most importantly the children.



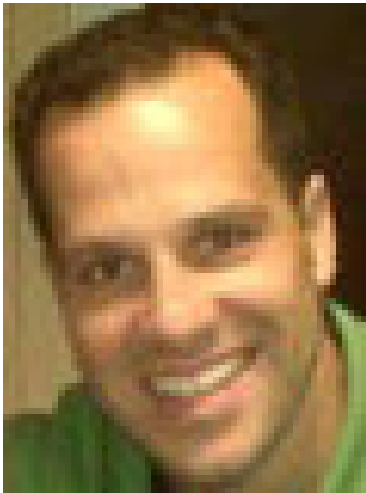
Janell Vazquez Falquez, ARNP, MSN
Volunteer 2002 – present

VACC Camp has made a major impact on my life and career. I began as a volunteer at just 13 years old and knew I had a passion for nursing. I became particularly close with Elliott and his family and because of them, I was able to learn how to feed him via g-tube, how to suction his trach, and what to do in the case of an emergency by showing me how to use the ambu-bag. All those skills one learns in nursing school, and I was able to learn and practice them every year during camp. Now, I am a staff member and serve as a Registered Nurse and a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. I am forever grateful to Dr. Simpser, VACC Camp, and all the campers and their families for the joy and success they have brought to my life. My life has never been the same since my first year at camp and I know I will continue volunteering for many years to come!



Javier Hernandez, RRT / NPS, RPFT, MHSA
Volunteer

Like Easter and baseball season, to me VACC camp is a rite of spring. I set my calendar around it, and look forward to it every year. At first I believed I wanted to help families that were less fortunate, however, I soon realized that first year that I would receive so much more from the campers and families that I could ever give them. I am grateful to have had the fortune of learning such valuable life lessons from the campers and their families through our interactions over all of these years.



Jennifer Ponder BS, CCLS
Camp Child Life Specialist 2012

Being able to be a part of VACC Camp is indescribable. It was truly an honor to meet the campers and their families as well as the incredible staff who are so dedicated to making this week something the families will never forget. VACC Camp has taught me to always have a “Can Do” attitude. It is a motto that I try to live by each and every day. Getting to experience the joys of camp is something I hold very near and dear to my heart. Although I have moved away, I still love to share VACC Camp with people I meet. I was even able to refer a camper from my hometown. Being able to share VACC Camp with others and allowing camp to change their lives as it did mine is something I love to do. Happy 30th anniversary VACC Camp!



Jenny Justice, M.S., CCLS
Camp Child Life Specialist

I was a novice Child Life Specialist at Miami Children’s Hospital when I had the opportunity to volunteer at the Ventilator Assisted Children’s Camp offered by Dr. Simpser. I had never participated in a camp specifically for children with medical needs, much less children dependent on a ventilator or in need of assistive breathing. I immediately fell in love with the entire experience and my one day of volunteering turned into a collaboration with VACC Camp for the next 3 years. When Bela Florentin asked if I would come back the following year as the Activities Coordinator, I jumped at the opportunity. I had no idea the impact this experience would have on my career as a CLS. VACC camp opened my eyes to “possibilities”!!! The possibility for these kids to attend a camp, swim, go on a boat, dance, make new friends, sing, be in a race, and to have FUN!! I watched first time campers’ blossom from quiet, introverted children into outgoing, confident and empowered kids in just 5 days. I know that my experience working with VACC Camp has provided me with the compassion and vision to support children facing a myriad of physical and medical challenges for the last 18 years! I am forever grateful!



I remember being thrilled to be invited to participate on VACC Camp 1987 but also very nervous as well. At that time I was the director of the Child Life Departmentt which was much smaller than it is now. I had helped start the UOTS weekend camp for hematology/oncology children as well volunteered at Sunny Shores Sea Camp for children with Cystic Fibrosis, both amazing experiences. So initially I was happy to be included, thought this will be like the others, what an excellent idea, etc, However at the first meeting I attended (there at the park - I forget the name- isn't that terrible?) I thought, no, I realized I might be in a bit over my head. Initially I thought we'd be planning activities for vent dependent children of varying abilities ages 5 or 6 years of age to maybe 16 years. That in and of itself would have been challenge enough. However Dr. Simpser was quick to let me know that my challenge was greater in that we would also need to provide activities for the siblings of the campers ages 2 years to about 18 years and all perfectly healthy active children! Planning camp activities for children ages 5 - 12 who may be battling illness but can pretty much participate in many activities was one thing but planning a week full of camp activities for children of basically all ages and of all levels of ability was quite another. But THAT IS WHAT VACC CAMP WAS ALL ABOUT, showing children and their families all the things they COULD do. Anyway, somehow it all came together quite wonderfully and that was the beginning of Child Life's involvement in VACC camp. VACC Camp was an incredible experience for me personally and professionally. It kind of had a life of it's own. I am thrilled to have been a part of it and see it grow over the years (even from NY I viewed pics on the web) and I am sure that all the Child Life Specialists who participated year after year after I did had just as much of an amazing, incredible experience.



I was honored to be involved with VACC Camp in 1995. At that time I was working as a clinical nurse specialist on 2 East. Dr. Simpser approached me and asked me if I would like to be the day nurse for VACC Camp. I remember telling Dr. Simpser that I didn't know much about the camp because I was relatively new to Miami Children's Hospital. He laughed and replied, "Don't worry. You will learn all about it right along with the rest of us!" I laughed and agreed to participate. Besides, who could say no to Dr. Simpser? He was one of our favorite 2 East physicians!

I think the thing that I remember the most about VACC Camp was how much fun everyone had at camp, especially the parents and the children. I was especially shocked when I found out that we were going to spend a day at the beach. What, kids with tracheostomies and ventilators at the beach?!? I nearly fainted when Dr. Simpser said to me, "You look like a strong swimmer, so make sure that each one of the kids goes in the water." I thought he was joking until we got to the South Pointe Beach and everyone went to the water. I took a very small child with a tracheostomy into the ocean. At first the child was afraid, but after he got used to it, I had a hard time getting him out of the ocean. I think it was his first time "swimming" in the ocean.

At the end of the week when we were saying goodbye to all the children and their families, I realized that I had been a part of something very special for these children and families. The week at VACC Camp provided each child an opportunity to be a kid, and allowed parents the opportunity to enjoy the week with their child in a supportive, caring environment. VACC Camp provided me with a special perspective of these amazing children and their families. Thank you, Dr. Simpser, for asking me to be a part of this special camp. I will always remember you and the children of VACC Camp!



Kimberly Morales, MHA, CCLS
Camp Child Life Specialist

VACC camp afforded the children the opportunity to participate in activities that most of us take for granted like a dip in a pool, a cruise on a boat, a trip to the beach, participate in Prom, etc... It is heart-warming to see these children interact in a normal setting with other children with similar challenges as opposed to the hospital setting, where a majority of these children spend their time. Just seeing the campers smile and laugh with each other and the happiness it brought to their parents and siblings made the experience more rewarding than I ever expected.



Kimberly Morris Dollinger
Camp Child Life Specialist

When I worked as a Child Life Specialist at Miami Children's Hospital, one of the exciting parts of the job was providing activities for the many summer camps sponsored by the hospital.

VACC Camp was one of the most amazing experiences! I loved planning and implementing activities for the kids who were ventilator dependent and providing activities for their siblings as well. It was a way for these kids to have normalcy in their lives by attending summer camp. It also gave the families support because they were able to socialize with other families with similar circumstances. Sometimes the kids could do the activities independently and other times I played or did the activity for them. I always loved the swing set that the kids could use because their wheelchairs locked in place! There was so much camaraderie amongst the staff and interdisciplinary team. Dr. Simpson is a genius, and I loved being a part of this one of a kind camp experience!



It all began 18 years ago when I was hired as a nurse practitioner in the Department of Pulmonology. Under the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Moises Simpser and his wonderful team, I found in me a hidden devotion and interest in caring for children with complex medical needs. Through the years, not only did my clinical skills grow; but a newly found passion and love for VACC camp transpired. VACC camp has inspired me to be a true nurse and patient advocate.

With each year that passed, and as my professional career transformed, my personal passion and loyalty to VACC camp has endured. I now share my experiences by enabling nursing students to participate in VACC camp. Not only has it taught me; it has also taught many of my students how a nurse's scope of practice extends beyond the hospital setting. I look forward to participating in VACC camp with my nursing students just to show them how fun and rewarding it all can be!

I admire, cherish and look forward to each and every moment VACC camp has to offer. Despite it being the same camp year after year, each year is unique in its own way-never a dull moment! While at VACC camp, I choose to take nothing for granted and give of myself like no other time because this, I know, is the most special time of the year for me, as well as many of our families. We anxiously and eagerly look forward to it all year long! It has been a special place where I have experienced many mixed emotions; but always coupled with a sense of safety, security, and freedom to belong and be appreciated. In a very heartening way, I believe VACC camp uplifts not only myself; but our campers to experience memories that will last us a lifetime. At VACC camp, together, we grow and together, we embrace every ability while forgetting any disabilities that may exist.

Through the years, VACC camp has made me a better mother, communicator, nurse, and educator- I am a better person! It has not only been a privilege; but an honor, to be part of the VACC camp team as I educate, advocate, and serve the children, families, students and volunteers that come together every spring. In my heart there will always be the fondest admiration, highest esteem and utmost respect for my VACC camp family! Happy Anniversary and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be part of the VACC camp team!

It was a privilege to attend VACC camp as the Child Life Specialist from 2008-2011. The campers, families, and volunteers I was able to meet will always have a special place in my heart. My four years at camp were filled with nothing other than unforgettable experiences, memories, and friendships to last a lifetime. I can't thank Dr. Simpser enough for allowing the Child Life team at MCH to participate in this amazing experience year after year. Congrats to VACC Camp and Dr. Simpser in celebrating 30 years, here's to 30 more! VACC CAMP... WHOOT WHOOT!



Javier Hernandez, RRT, MHSA, Dr. Moises Simpser, Rose Ann Farrell, LSCW, Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC, Bela Florentin, Osvaldo Fernandez, RT, Dr. Maria Franco, Laura Hernandez, DNP, ARNP, and Monica Stuffer, RN at Hard Rock Café in 2016



Lic. Gustavo Olguin. Klgo. Ftra. MBA Hosp. TRC

Jefe de Servicio de Kinesiología, Hospital de Pediatría Dr Prof J P Garrahan, Buenos Aires Argentina
Consultor Clínico NONIN Medical Inc. LATAM
Voluntario de la Fundación El Arte de Vivir - Salud -

My experience in the VACC Camp. March 2000

In 1999, in a symposium on Noninvasive Mechanical Ventilation, in Orlando, I heard Dr. Moises Simpser talk about of what they were doing with chronic ventilated patients, and I was very impressed with his words and the images showed by him. On my return to Buenos Aires, in my desire to learn more and more, I got in touch with Mrs. Bela Florentin and Dr. Simpser to allow me to visit the VACC CAMP, and learn more about managing chronic ventilated patients, which in my country was not known very well. I finally succeeded in convincing the organizers of VACC CAMP why I wanted to visit and also my hospital, I told them that I am going to this camp to learn more about managing pediatric chronic ventilated patients.

Once I got to Miami, in March 2000, I called Dr. Simpser from the hotel and when I asked him what kind of clothing I should wear, he told me these exact words, "wear a bathing suit and sandals, we give you the shirt !! " And that moment I understood that this experience would be different and it was so. To live this week with the staff of volunteers who work with such love and dedication, with the aim that this week be the happiest week for children, being with patients that despite their limitations are really happy, and sharing time with parents, where they see and feel that the rights of their children to be happy are reciprocated, this experience taught me that the shift in focus of these kids, the jump in quality, is the love provided to them, beyond the therapeutic care they receive.. I do not hesitate a second to say that was the best human experience that I have lived within the profession in my life, that changed my view on the handling and care of chronic patients and marked a before and after in my career. I'll never stop being grateful in my entire life, for the opportunity they gave me to know the camp and those who do work on it, teaching me that, the care of these children must be based always in love, acceptance and compassion.

I am grateful too, because that visit, in where I was very well attended, produced a bond of good friendship, and that bond will be forever. I have no doubt that the VACC CAMP is a role model by the positive effect on children and their families and professionals because decidedly reminds us that there is nothing more powerful to cure than the strength of love .

Thank you very much.



Gustavo with Noelia Beno's son Tommy

En el año 1999 escuche en un Simposio de Ventilación Mecánica No Invasiva, Orlando, hablar al Dr. Moises Simpser, sobre el trabajo que estaban haciendo con los pacientes ventilados crónicos, y quedé muy impresionado con sus palabras y las imágenes que mostró. A mi regreso a Buenos Aires, en mi afán de aprender cada vez más, me puse en contacto con Bela Florentin y el Dr. Simpser para que me permitieran visitar el VACC Camp, y aprender más sobre el manejo del paciente ventilado crónico, algo que en mi país no estaba muy arreglado. Luego de muchos tramites pude finalmente lograr convencer a los organizadores del VACC CAMP de porqué quería visitarlos y también a mi hospital, a quienes les dije que iría a este Campamento a aprender mas sobre el manejo del ventilado crónico.

Una vez que llegue a Miami, en Marzo del 2000, desde el hotel llame por teléfono al Dr. Simpser y cuando le dije que había llegado y que vestimenta debía llevar, me dijo textuales palabras, " ponte traje de baño y ojotas, que la camiseta te la damos nosotros!!" Y ahí en ese mismo instante comprendí que esta experiencia iba a ser distinta y ya lo creo que fue así.

Convivir esa semana con el staff de personas voluntarias que trabajan con tanto amor y dedicación para que esa semana sea la más feliz de los niños, estar junto a los pacientes, que a pesar de sus limitaciones son realmente felices y con los padres, donde ven y sienten que los derechos de sus hijos a ser felices son correspondidos, no hizo más que enseñarme que el cambio de atención de estos chicos, el salto de calidad está, en el amor que se les brinda, mas allá de la atención terapéutica que reciben. No dudo un segundo en afirmar que fue la experiencia más humana que viví dentro de la profesión en toda mi vida, que cambio mi visión sobre el manejo y atención del paciente crónico y marcó un antes y un después en mi vida profesional. Nunca voy a dejar de estar agradecido de por vida, por esta oportunidad que me dieron de conocer el campamento y a quienes lo hacen funcionar, de enseñarme que la atención de estos chicos debe estar basada siempre desde el amor, la aceptación y la compasión.

Estoy agradecido también, porque a partir de esa visita, en donde me sentí muy bien atendido, se hizo un lazo de amistad muy lindo y siempre bien correspondido, y que así será por siempre.

No tengo la menor duda que el VACC CAMP es un modelo a seguir, por el efecto positivo en los niños y en sus familias y porque decididamente a los profesionales nos hace recordar que no hay nada más fuerte para curar, que es la fuerza del amor.

Muchas gracias por tanto.



Gustravo with camper Chelsea King, Carmen Prieto and Jenny Justice

Margerry J. Yuhico, RN

I was still a student nurse in Dr. Laura Hernandez’s class when I started VACC camp in 2009. At first I didn’t know anything. It was just part of school work until graduation. Seven years later I know I owe my nursing career to camp. After I graduated and passed my boards I spent 5 1/2 years at Miami Children’s Hospital in the cardiac intensive care unit. I loved every minute of it. I gave hope to parents of children who got tracheostomies. I brought awareness of the camp to my fellow co-workers and hooked them! In 2015 I moved to Baptist Hospital just to expand my horizons but camp still lives within me. I cannot imagine my life and career without camp. I believe camp has made me a better and more compassionate nurse who not only takes care of the patient but the whole family!



Maria Alejandra Yepes, RN, BSN

As I sat reading one of the nursing magazines that I get in the mail, I stumbled across an article describing VACC camp and I got goose bumps. I knew in that moment that I wanted to contribute in any way possible and I didn’t hesitate to google the organization and contact Ivette. I’ve been volunteering for 3 years now and it has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life. To see the joy that pours out of these children and their families regardless of their physical limitations has inspired me to enjoy every day to the fullest. I have had the privilege to serve alongside many volunteers that are truly devoted and passionate about VACC camp just as I am. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those key members that have contributed through the years, and I would really like to thank Dr. Mo for having the courage and drive to make his vision a reality. May God give him and the rest of the staff the strength to continue VACC camp for many more years.



Maria with camper sibling Isabella Nagle

Marlene Sotelo
Camp Child Life Specialist and Music Therapy

VACC camp was truly one of the most amazing experiences I had as a Child Life Specialist and Music Therapist for Miami Children’s Hospital. This camp provided families with an experience of a lifetime and allowed children to participate in activities they may not otherwise have ever been able to enjoy. I remember going in the pool with several children on ventilators and watching the exhilaration on their faces. After a long day of swimming, games, arts-n-crafts, and lots and lots to eat, we sat around the camp fire for our evening sing-a-longs. It is amazing what can be accomplished when you just believe. That is what Dr. Simpson showed us all with this beautiful experience. If you believe that someone CAN, they WILL. VACC camp is something I will always remember as a life changing experience for me, the volunteers, the campers, and their families. Thank you for letting me be part of something so special.



Marlene Sotelo with her guitar singing for our campers



Marlene with camper Greg Solis

Monica McConaughy Stouffer, RN
Alliance Homecare Systems, Inc. CEO
Participant of VACC 31 years
Mother of 4 children who have attended every camp since they were born

VACC...

Where can you go and find inner peace....
Where can you go and fulfill the unimaginable....
Where can you go where they give so much and ask nothing in return...
Where can you go and see everybody happy and content...
Where can you go where you can meet some of the most incredible people on Earth...
Where can you go and be entertained from the break of dawn to the moonlight hours.,,
Where can you go and see a child swim in a pool who was told they never will again...
Where can you go and find a bond that can never be broken...
Where can you go where Doctors, Nurses, Therapists, Social Workers, Volunteers give you all their time and there is no bill....

VACC CAMP...WHOOT WHOOT...VACC CAMP... WHOOT WHOOT...THAT IS WHERE THE PARTY IS AT....



Monica with her husband Jeff



Laura Hernandez, DmP, ARNP, Ivette Hidalgo, ARNP, Monica with camper Lisa Nanni (RIP) Monica M. Stouffer, RN and Dr. Moises Simpson



Monica with camper Greta Baier



Monica, Stephanie Cortijo and Greta Baier with her mother



Monica with camper Jessica Leyva

Noelia C. Beno, RRT

Experiences of children enjoying activities for the first time and their smiles were my reward. Being part of the unique team that made it all possible through the VACC, was priceless. I also captured 18 memorable years of my four kids having fun on film with the VACC family. VACC camp, thirty years later stands as a testament to one special man's vision, Dr. Moises Simpser. He changed many lives, including mine and I am forever grateful. As a respiratory therapist for 32 years, working the camp was the most fulfilling experience of my career.



Noelia as fortune teller



Noelia and her 2 small children



Noelia with equipment at camp



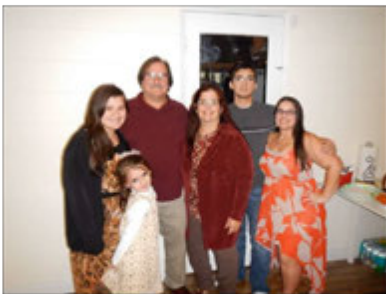
Noelia, Ralph Padierne and Dr. Simpser



Noelia with her daughter Michelle at the 20 VACC Camp anniversary celebration



Noelia with husband Tom, her daughter Carolyn with her husband Michael and Noelia's daughter Michelle at the 30th Anniversary party



Noelia with husband Tom, her daughter Carolyn, her son Tommy, her daughter Michelle and her granddaughter



Noelia with husband Tom, her daughter Carolyn, her son Tommy, her daughters Christina, Carolyn and Michelle and her granddaughter

Oswaldo Fernandez , RRT (Ozzy)

Respiratory Therapist at camp 2008 to present

I originally started VACC camp in order to impress my boss, but after one day of being there I realized how great this camp was. To be able to affect and/or help out different people has truly made me a better person. The hard work put in by everyone that attends this camp is truly worth it at the end; to be able to help out the campers do things they normally don't get chances to do. To see the parent's faces when their child smiles is truly priceless. I thought originally (my first day) that I was doing VACC camp, the hospital, and Dr. Simpser a favor by going to camp, but to be honest it was VACC Camp, the staff, the kids, and the campers that have done me a favor and made me a better person. Thank You Dr. Simpser for the opportunity that you have given me to be able to be a part of this camp up to now and for many more years to come.



Ozzy with his wife Margo and their daughter



Ozzy in action at Nikki Beach, ambu-bagging Maylan Chavez and Miami Beach firefighters



Ozzy with Mike Miehler and Margerry Yuhico at Hard Rock café



Ozzy with Monica Stouffer, RN at Nikki beach



VACC Camp to me means SO MANY THINGS! It all started with the vision of one Great Man. Dr. Simpson who is the founder of VACC Camp had one dream and one goal. That was to make sure that children with a disability experience and keep in their hearts all the fond memories that are created during that 1 week of VACC CAMP. His dreams and goals have been fulfilled for over 30 years with the help of his staff and the community.

I first joined the VACC Camp team in 1990 as part of the medical team. I have to admit that I am not much of a camper, however, just seeing the smiles on all these children's faces as well as the smiles on their parents faces as they see their child enjoying things that they would never be able to enjoy, made me come back year after year. I have learned so much and as a mother and a Professor in the University, teach my children and my nurse practitioner students that we need to always give back to the Community.

Besides the memories, friendships and happiness that is brought forth from VACC Camp, I have been able to see how so many young adults who initially come to VACC Camp to fulfill their Community Service hours for high school, continue to come year after year and have become Medical Professionals in later life. VACC Camp to me is One Man's Dream, "Dr. Moises Simpson" brought to reality.



VACC Camp is an inspiration to me because of all the thoughtfulness and care put into it by the staff and volunteers. It is clear how much of Dr. Simpson's vision continues to be carried out by the joy seen and expressed by both patients and family members. Thank you all for what you do each year to make this wonderful Camp come to life!



The VACC Camp for me has been an opportunity to share my time, laughter and experience with these wonderful kids that are full of life! Over the years I've seen the camp grow and share the love and vision that Dr. Simpson has had for these special kids. To see the happy faces on the children at the camp every day is inspiring to me. The kids feel that they are a part of a fraternity without anyone judging them for their illnesses or making fun of their impairment. They get to be themselves with their peers. They get to be kids playing pranks on each other, misbehaving at times and loving every minute of it too. I have seen many of these children return every year expecting to have fun and see familiar faces.

I truly feel blessed to be given an opportunity to participate in this event every year, and look forward to Camp 2018 to do it again.



Being a part of VACC Camp was the highlight of my nursing career. Even though I was physically and mentally exhausted at the end of the week, it was so emotionally fulfilling that words cannot explain. I worked as the camp clinical coordinator for 5 years and when I left Miami Children's Hospital to be a mom I missed it so much I returned for many years to volunteer bringing my children so they could have the same awesome experience. My most memorable experience was when all the parents were going out for a "parent's night out" and hearing one of them say "we have never been out alone since our child's illness". Watching the ventilator assisted children and their families having so much fun and sharing the obstacles they face with other like them is priceless. We have all made life-long friends at VACC Camp. I now live out of the state of Florida and have a child with Muscular Dystrophy and special needs. I think of VACC Camp often. We recently went waterskiing with a group of children and adults with similar physical disabilities using adaptable chairs and spotters to ski. My daughter said while in tears, "you have no idea how great it is to talk to someone who knows what it is like to be me". We made lifelong connections that are helping us cope with the difficulties we must face. I have often thought back to VACC Camp and how strong those families are and how VACC Camp gives them faith and hope for the future. I really understand the feeling "I can do this," "it's going to be ok!"



Tara with camper Jonathan Carcano (RIP)



Tara with husband Doug and her children at the VACC Camp 20th anniversary celebration



Tara with Fran Marques and Dr. Antonio Rodriguez





Staff and Volunteer Staff

Alicia Della Volpe, MD

Once upon a time and long ago, I found myself very sick... and thought that if I require a tracheostomy to continue living, I would not ever consider it. But, as if God wanted me to see Life the way it is, I got to know Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp last year when I was invited to participate in the boating and the Karaoke night experience as one of their doctors. I could see many amazing things, among them, the courage, joy of living, and the willing to share fun of these children who breathe through their tracheostomies, and some of them, attached to ventilators. Even being a doctor, used to see these cases in the hospital, I usually see them when they are sick, but have never had the chance to see them enjoying outdoors activities or even singing. Also, it was a very emotional moment for me to meet a young beautiful lady who had a tracheostomy when she was a child and is currently decannulated and having a great life. So, after this mind changing experience, I returned to Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp this year. I danced and sang and had again the greatest time with these kids and families. I am well and healthy now. And because of the Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp, I changed my point of view regarding artificial airway in the proper setting, if I had to consider it for me...



Antonio Rodriguez, MD

Dr. Moises Simpser and I worked together for 32 years. We started as partners, became close friends, and over time he became my brother. Together we lived the growth and expansion of Variety Children's Hospital to Miami Children's Hospital and now to Nicklaus Children's Hospital. There was no one more passionate, more caring and loyal to our hospital, and the children it served, than Moises Simpser. Moises always felt privileged of being a small part of the lives of everyone he touched, of our office staff, of the hospital nurses and respiratory therapists, of the clerks, of his beloved residents, and even of the hospital administrators. He enjoyed mingling with everyone.

But his greatest creation was the VACC Camp. This was his real passion. Moises was never happier than when VACC Camp week rolled along. He was like a kid in a candy store. Happy, dancing, doing crazy things to entertain his kids. Moises has made an incredible life-long difference in the lives of hundreds of these chronically ill children and their families throughout the country. It is his legacy.

Moises loved every minute of it. Taking care of his patients, the interaction with the hospital personnel, the teaching of the residents, the challenges of running a practice, and yes, the occasional fight on behalf of anyone who he thought was being treated unfairly. Because Moises was definitely a people person, an incredible human being, a passionate, just and loyal man with a huge heart, who loved his family and friends unconditionally.

Dr. Moises Simpser will be missed by everyone who was fortunate enough to have been part of his life.



Bela Florentin
VACC Camp Coordinator

Camp is an extraordinary experience for everyone involved, the staff, the campers and their families, and all the volunteers, adults and teens. Your life perspective changes after experiencing VACC Camp for the first time. I was supposed to help Dr. Moises Simpser, a personal friend whom I respect and admire profoundly, only for one year after the previous camp coordinator left andthat was 21 years ago and I am still here.

My job involves recruiting volunteers, recruiting campers, fundraising, organizing meetings and trainings, planning activities, budgeting, ordering supplies, etc. In essence, I manage all aspects of camp except the medical which is taken care by my co-worker and friend Ivette, Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC. I aim yearly to make the camp week an awesome memorable week for all.

I am blessed to count with the help of great volunteers that happily and unselfishly give their time and support to make camp possible year after year and without whom camp would not be possible. I know that through camp we all make a difference in every camper's life and that of their families too. You just have to experience the smiles on the children's and their parents' faces to understand what camp does for them. I also know that camp changes the lives of the volunteers as well and teaches them to appreciate what they have and not take anything for granted. It also opens to those that had an inclination, the possibility of a medical career. We have seen through the years many become nurses, some doctors, other respiratory and occupational therapists and other social workers. Some of them continue volunteering through graduate school and others after they graduate, return to volunteer at camp as professionals.

Camp has been a very rewarding and emotionally fulfilling experience for me. Together with Dr. Moises Simpser and the rest of our staff/volunteers, I know we have been instrumental in changing many lives for the better.



Bela and Dr. Moises Simpser at Shake a Leg



Bela with Camper Christopher Gonzalez, Dr. Simpser and camper Brett Atwood.



Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC, Rose Ann Farrell, LCSW, Dr. Moises Simpser, his daughter Tamar Choi, Mike Miehler-operations, Javier Hernandez, CRT, Laura Henandez, DMP, PPCNP-BC



Dr. Simpser, Eliana Lyne –operations, Bela, Rose Ann Farrell, LCSW, Ivetter Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC, Brittany Brown- Child life and Karen Cabezas, RN team parade during carnival day.



Team leader Christina Perez, Operations- Eliana Lyne, camper Maylan Chavez and her nurse Yuliana, Bela, Volunteer Patricia Delguys and operations Anthony Camejo

As a certified child life specialist (CCLS), my goal in the hospital setting is to teach children about their diagnosis and help them and their families cope with hospitalization. During a typical day at work I help children by normalizing their environment, I empower patients by giving them a platform on which to express their emotions, and I minimize my patient’s fears by helping them understand what to expect through education and medical play. I have a strong background in child development, the needs of children with special needs/special medical needs, and the effects hospitalization has on the pediatric population and their families. 2016 was my first year working at VACC Camp. I was blown away with the immense positive impact this camp has on the lives of its campers, their families, and the dozens of high school volunteers that spend their spring break vacation dedicated to this organization.

After the first day at VACC Camp, it is clear to see that these campers are just like everyone else. This camper is really good at connect four, that camper is obsessed with video games, this camper loves to dance, that camper knows all the words to every Taylor Swift song. Each one of the campers are unique and special in their own ways and just *happen* to need a little extra help breathing with the use of a tracheostomy tube. Not only does VACC Camp provide the campers with activities that they would be hesitant to try outside of camp (for example going swimming or going to the beach), but it also gives the campers (and their families) an opportunity to see that other children their age go through similar experiences. This aspect is also highly beneficial for siblings of the campers by allowing them to realize that other kids have brothers/sisters with traches, too. With this tone of equality and normalization set within the first day of camp, it allows the campers and their families to relax, let their guard down, and just have fun!



Diane dancing at Hard Rock Cafe

Twelve years ago, I was contacted by Dr. Moises Simpser, founder of VACC CAMP. He was in need of someone to fill in for his long time “Breakfast Cook”, recently retired. All I had to do was come in every morning for one week and cook breakfast for the staff, volunteers and campers. How hard could that be? I called my good buddy, John Rogers and told him I was going to make him a STAR FOR A WEEK! We committed to come in for this ONE week and help Dr. Simpser out. John became known and loved as “THE SAUSAGE MAN”. Everyone stood in line waiting for his sausages! And guess what, we have been back every year since. Our one week experience cooking and observing an incredible dedicated group of volunteers providing what we all term normal camp activities (swimming, sailing, dancing) to children who spend 24 hours a day in wheelchairs attached to their ventilator, was amazing! Happiness is seeing a child smile, flourish, succeed and know you made a difference.



Iris and John at camp during breakfast



Celebrating at VACC Camp 30th anniversary event

Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC

Undoubtedly, Dr. Simpser is one of the most humble individuals that I have known. He wears his emotions on his sleeve. He is always there to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. His love for others has no boundaries. He is passionate, self-driven, and a powerhouse of energy. He stands for what he believes in no matter what. VACC Camp was a dream inspired by his love to help one of the most vulnerable pediatric populations, children with complex medical conditions who are dependent on tracheostomies, ventilators and/or oxygen for survival. Because of his perseverance, determination, and self-less love VACC Camp became a reality.

At camp children and their families realize that anything and everything is possible no matter how impossible it may seem. Families no longer feel alone or isolated. They develop friendships with other families who are facing similar circumstances and find much needed support in these relationships. Families leave camp renewed and full of hope knowing their child is capable of participating and enjoying activities which they previously thought were impossible such as swimming in the pool and the beach, and sailing.

I believe that God provides each one of us with a purpose in life. Dr. Simpser has fulfilled his purpose. Through love he inspires others, such as campers and their families, nurses, doctors, and volunteers to be the best they can be despite any adverse circumstances they might be facing. He gives you wings and lets you fly! My hat off to you Dr. Simpser! You are simply the BEST!!



Ivette with her daughter Isabella



Top row down: Monica Stouffer, RN, Osvaldo Fernandez, CRT, Bela Florentin, Anthony Camejo, Alyssa Garcia, Diane Morales, Eliana Lyne, Rose Ann Farrell, Dr. Moises Simpser, Ivette Hidalgo, PhD, PPCNP-BC, Laura Hernandez, DMP

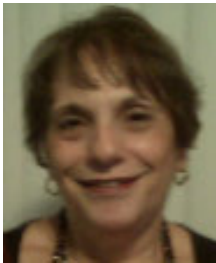
Maria E Franco, MD
Director, Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp
Director, Cystic Fibrosis Center

Dr. Simpser... Moises, he was a mentor to me. I met him as a medical student, then as a pediatrician when he encouraged me to stay in the United States and pursue a career in pediatric pulmonology. After my fellowship I came back as a partner to the pulmonology practice, and, after 20 years as a partner and friend I can affirm that he was a man of integrity, with a generous heart, who always spoke his mind and never compromised his values no matter what was at stake... he was the voice of all who he felt were mistreated, the voice of the underdog... he was always the advocate for his patients, for the nurses, for the residents, for the cleaning people and for anyone who talked to him and asked for his help, and there where many who came to our office to request his advice and his support. He was always available to listen to anyone who needed him.

He left the directorship of his beloved VACC Camp to his partners and to me as the representative. It is a big challenge to keep the camp running for 30 more years, but we are here to keep his legacy of love... camp changes the life of many every year, the campers, their families, and the volunteers. This camp is here to remind us of what is important in life.... to touch the life of someone and make them smile and in the process discover their own heart.



What VACC means to me and has given me. This may sound simple but it has been very hard to come up with words for something that is greater than any words could ever express. VACC Camp has been a huge part of my life for several years and will always continue to be. Next to my children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and family it has been by far my greatest experience. I was blessed to be given this opportunity to experience and share with all my grandchildren and family. It has enhanced all of my family's lives; teaching us and enriching us by adding value to our lives and being more loving, understanding, giving and appreciative of life and people's uniqueness. I once said many years ago when interviewed by news reported that VACC Camp was a 'WIN-WIN' situation for everyone involved and that is what VACC Camp is. Not one person who is or has been involved in VACC Camp comes away without gaining some extraordinary experience to take with them for their life. For me VACC Camp is one of the most pure and highly spiritual environments here on earth. VACC Camp is a sanctuary for people to live as God desires. It has been the greatest enrichment in my life, where I feel like I get a glimpse of heaven. VACC Camp is a place where you get the chance to be a part of enriching the lives of many others as well. VACC Camp is a place where you see and experience true happiness and love with everyone involved; campers, their families and all volunteers. It has been inspiring to see hundreds of teen volunteers throughout the many years give so much of their time, heart and love. Many have come back to volunteer year after year; others never left as volunteers and others have had career changes deciding to get into the medical field. In addition to all these wonderful, blessed experience and opportunities I have had; VACC Camp has personally been a healing ground for me. A place where I have been given the chance to heal both physical as well as emotionally. To finalize what VACC Camp is to me and everyone involved I can only come up with one word. VACC Camp is LOVE.



Rose Ann with Ivette, Nurse Carla from Argentina, Heather Silva, child life guest this year and Ozzi and Dr. Simpser



Rose Ann, LCSW during carnival day

Sponsors and Donors of Supplies

Alison Garfinkel, RN BSN
Director of Clinical Services
Pedi Stat, Inc.

We are so honored to participate in the “30th year of VACC Camp” Celebration! We have been long time supporters of VACC Camp, providing oxygen and medical equipment to the camp, so that the campers and their families feel safe away from home. In addition to equipment, Pedi Stat has been offering our Respiratory Therapists the opportunity to volunteer at camp for swimming and beach day. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the smiles on the children’s faces as they get to experience the water and the sand.

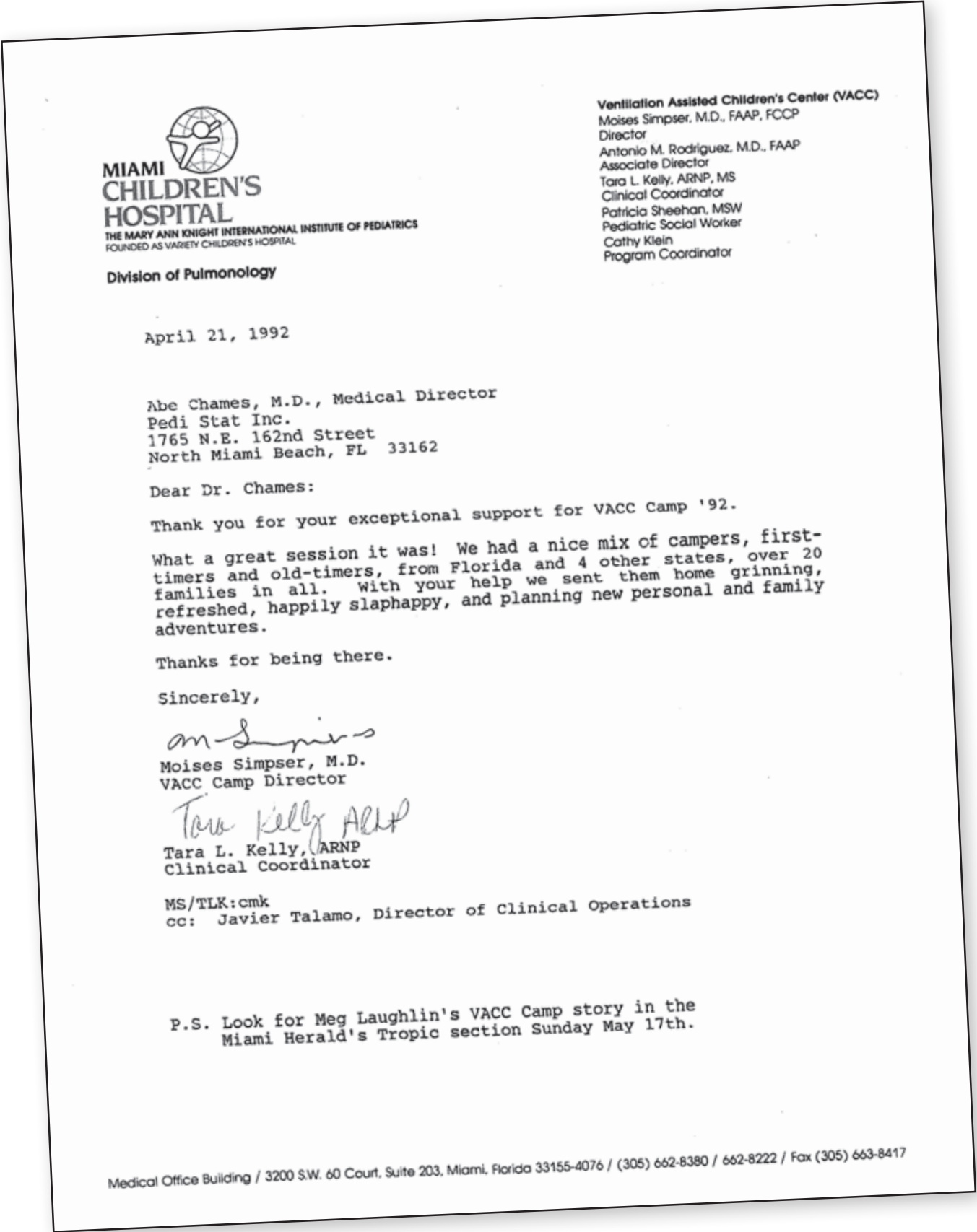
I spent some time looking back through our company’s archives today for some early memories of VACC Camp. I was delighted to find this letter dating back from 1992! This year Pedi Stat is celebrating our 25th year in business here in South Florida. I was so excited to find that we have been supporting VACC Camp since the very beginning! Looking forward to continuing the support of VACC Camp, and all of your remarkable campers for many more years to come!



Allison Garfinkel with camper Maylan Chavez and Respiratory Therapist Jazmin Davy



Back row, left to right: Seema Loskove, Leo Sanmartin, Alicia Morgan, Julio Somarriba, Dawn Longoria, Jennifer Bencsik, Maggie Paez, Yalina Valdez, and Fatima Diaz
Front row: Daniel Miller, CFO; Grizzy Miller, President; Alison Garfinkel, Director of Clinical Services.



When I first started taking pictures for VACC camp, Dr. Simpson said, "Relax. Just capture the emotion." I was used to posing the families and then having the kids run and jump and play. I wasn't used to photographing children in wheel chairs. I thought, "Ok, I can do this." The first day I shot was back in 2010, at Shake-a-leg and Dr. Simpson was in his red shirt making jokes and smiling. It was mayhem: everyone grabbing life jackets, moving to the boats, and I felt like I was in the way. An outsider. I wanted to fit in and get great pictures. Dr. Simpson took me out on a boat. He explained who everyone was, their stories, how long they had been at VACC camp. He made me feel comfortable, important, like a celebrity photographer taking pictures of royalty. That day, I took pictures of families laughing, swimming, singing; things I assumed did not happen often in their real lives. This camp was a gift and I wanted to be a part of it forever.

It has been a joy to spend the week with the campers, their families, volunteers and staff having fun and creating memories. Dr. Simpson has become one of my favorite people. I love his humor and honesty. His way of making me feel special and needed and loved is something I try to emulate. I look forward to VACC camp every year, because in addition to all the other great stuff, I get to spend time laughing and talking to him.

Thank you for including me in your VACC camp lives. I am a much better person because of it!



Allison with Dr. Simpson in Shake-a-Leg



Allison and her children in VACC Camp 30th anniversary

Aloha Islanders have been performing for the VACC camp for over 18 years. With each performance we love seeing the reaction on the children's faces when they hear the drumming music and watch our Hula and fire knife dancers perform. We are always surprised and delighted when the campers join our dancers on stage to do the hula. VACC campers are always ready to participate & dance with our performers. Performing for the VACC camp over these many years has been an honor and privilege. We look forward to bringing the Spirit of Aloha to future VACC campers for many more years to come!



Aloha Islander dancers and camper Chris Alvarez



Mary Worley at a Luau show and campers in the background

It's the deep pleasure of seeing people help one another. It's the inspiration of knowing someone with great difficulties can also feel great joy. It's the opportunity to see how we are not diminished but enriched by our giving. It's the gratitude I feel to be included, to be able to participate in that. It's a wow wrapped up in a thank you delivered by angels disguised as ordinary people. It's a good thing that you do.



Favorites and oldies with a tropical flair

This is a blog post I published about a week after my filming VACC Camp. It is the truest and most authentic representation of the impact the camp made on me and what the camp still means to me today.

Enjoy...

A week ago, I was given the opportunity to shoot a documentary film on the VACC Camp here in Miami. VACC (Ventilator Assisted Children Center) Camp is a free week-long overnight camp for children needing a tracheotomy, ventilator, C-PAP, BiPAP, or oxygen to support breathing, and their families. The children come from all over Florida and the United States to partake in activities such as swimming, going to the beach, boat rides, field trips, campsite entertainment, and structured games. For many of the children, these are activities they could only experience at the camp.

The camp, which celebrated its 25th year in 2011, was started by Dr. Moises Simpser, Director of the Divisions of Pulmonology and Pulmonary Care at Miami Children's Hospital. Simpser, who was born and raised in México City, México, became passionate about a camp for ventilator assisted children (several of whom were his own patients) after his own children were old enough to attend summer camp. He believed every child should have the opportunity to enjoy the highest quality of life possible, regardless of their health.

Since 1986, Simpser and his small but dedicated staff, enlist the aid of several dozen volunteers (many of whom are teenagers and medical students) to create a camp where these special needs children get to enjoy activities that are not readily accessible to technology dependent children. Moreover, the camp gives these children (and their parents) the chance to meet other campers who face the same challenges they do. Many of the children are wheelchair bound and have limited, if any, movement from the neck down.

Feeling sorry for them yet? Don't. Know why? Because as tough as you think these kids have it, they don't feel sorry for themselves. The truth is, I learned more important life lessons during my week-long shoot at the camp than I could have ever expected...

1) There Are People Out There Who Still Give a Damn

OK, so I kind of knew this already but that's where it always begins, yes? Someone has to first give a damn about something and then get others to also give a damn before any great thing gets done. Dr. Simpser, who has remarkably very little tolerance for the word "no", has gotten other people to give a damn about a camp for these children...and it hasn't come easy.

From securing a location (A.D. Barnes Park in Miami) and eliminating any safety hazards, to arranging transportation for the children (many of whom have oxygen-equipped wheelchairs that can weigh up to 500 pounds), providing daily meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner & snacks), boat rides (courtesy of Shake-A-Leg), overnight medical staff, and about 1001 other things that need to happen for a camp like this one to be successful. Simpser's dogged determination and that of his staff have kept this camp in motion for 25 years. Funny what you can accomplish just by giving a damn.

2) You're Only As Normal As You Think You Are

As part of my documentary shoot, I wanted to speak to several of the campers on camera to get their views on the camp as well as their own condition. Annelise, who has attended the camp for 6 years, was one of the children I interviewed. Annelise is confined to a wheelchair and needs to be connected to a ventilator 24 hours a day so that she can breathe.

Betrayed by her muscles, she can muster just enough movement in her arms to get a chop stick in her mouth so that she can reach her blackberry to send text messages and update her Facebook page (she puts most "normal" people to shame with the speed of her texting). When I asked her how she deals with her limitations, she replied, rather defiantly, "I don't know about them (the other campers), but I can do the same stuff that normal people do."

So many people see themselves as inferior because they feel they're too fat, too skinny, have too many pimples, have too little hair, have boobs that just aren't big enough, suck at sports – while a young girl who can't breathe, walk, or eat on her own sees herself as "normal". I guess "normal" is just a state of mind, isn't it?

3) Setting Goals Is Important

Maylan, who lives in Miami and is cared for by her mother, was another camper I had the pleasure of interviewing. Maylan faces the same challenges as Annelise: confined to a wheelchair, needs to be connected to a ventilator 24/7, and has limited movement below her shoulders. When I asked her what she sees herself doing over the next 10 years, I was quite surprised by her answer. She hopes to somehow attend John Hopkins University and go on to become a psychiatrist so that she "can help people with their problems". After she retires, she plans on returning to school to become a marine biologist and live by the ocean. "I have my whole life planned out", she said with a grin that would light up a musty cave.

You think goals are just something you write out on a piece of paper because that's what your Tony Robbins audio book said you should do? For some people, goals are what keeps them going; gives them a reason to get through another day; gives them the strength to look life in the face and say, "You'll never get the best of me until I'm done with these things." I took a fresh look at my own goals and realized that, compared to Maylan's, they were pretty weak – I'm gonna change that.

4) You Only Have One Life

Chris was another camper I was able to interview for my film project. Chris is perhaps one of the most popular kids in the camp. He can talk "smack" with the best of them and can often be seen zipping along on his motorized wheelchair at its top speed (which is pretty darn fast!). Chris, who made the journey with his mother all the way from New York City, suffers from an unusually rare disease known as Thanatophoric dysplasia - a severe skeletal disorder characterized by extremely short limbs and folds of extra skin on the arms and legs.

Infants born with this affliction are usually stillborn or die shortly after birth from respiratory failure. Chris has managed to make it to 13 years old (now in 2017 he is 19 years old) and it's his mother's steadfast belief that the main reason for that is because he looks forward to VACC camp every year. I asked him how he manages to keep such a positive outlook on his situation and he replied, "You only have one life so enjoy it as much as you can. When the time comes, that's the time – that's it." One life. We all know that...right? We'd never let fear, envy, anger, or resentment keep us from making that one life a purposeful one, right? A remarkable one, perhaps? Of course not.

5) Helping Other People Can Change Your Life

VACC Camp is made up solely of volunteers. Dr. Simpson is a firm believer that you get way more from people when they volunteer for service than when you pay them (don't get him started on that). Many of the volunteers are teenagers who give up their Spring Break (in South Florida!) to assist the campers for the week. VACC Camp staff go to the local High Schools to recruit new volunteers every year. Once enlisted, volunteers must complete several basic medical training sessions (these are mandatory). At first, students sign up just to get the community service hours (and the fact that three free meals are also provided). But as volunteer after volunteer confessed to me, the camp ultimately becomes a life-changing experience.

Several of the volunteers I spoke with were on their second, third and fourth tours of duty with the camp. Many of them stated that they look forward to the camp every year and couldn't think of spending their Spring Break doing anything else (did I mention these were mostly teenagers?). Volunteers are assigned specific campers and they become their "Buddies" - they help feed,

clothe, and bathe the campers as needed. As the week goes by, there's a bond that develops between the volunteers and the campers.

To the young volunteers, there's the good feeling that comes from "mattering" to someone else but during that same week, they also begin to understand that the campers matter to them as well. One of the volunteers put it this way: "These kids have a really hard life but at the same time, these are probably the happiest people you get to meet...ever. You can't help but change and become a better person for it."When we stop to help others, we help ourselves, too.

Reflection

During my week at VACC Camp (and a few days with my wife and daughter), I realized that making a difference in another human being's life sometimes takes a lot of careful planning and hard work. And we're already oh so busy with our own lives, yes? Much easier to simply text a \$10 donation and get on with life. But like the young volunteers who make up the majority of VACC Camp learned, as you give value to another human being's life, you get value in return; sometimes even greater than what you gave. It propels you back into your own world fresher, stronger, and more resilient than you were before. Think you can't find that type of value in time spent with someone who can't breathe on their own? Who can't walk? Who's been abused? Who's battling cancer? Who's blind? Who's been in Foster Care all their life? Who's in need? Think again.

When "Do no Evil" has been understood, Then learn the harder, braver rule, "Do Good." -Arthur Guiterman



Dan taking photos in the pool



Dan with Dr. Simpson and Harry Horgan at Shake-a-Leg

Don Long
Keep-In-Step Western Entertainment

There is a parable of the talents in the Bible (Matthew 25:14-30) which in reality is not about money. It is actually about the fact that God gives each of us unique gifts. We are meant to live our lives in community and use these gifts in service to others. Even Christ said that He Himself did not come to be served but to serve. In my own life I've found that when I have an opportunity to share the skills and abilities that God has given me with others in order to help them - that's when I feel the most joy, happiness and contentment. It's only in making an impact in the lives of others that we can truly feel the richness of life.

The Keep-In-Step Dancers were a group that shared that philosophy. Yes we did enjoy the music and dancing but our reward was the happiness and joy of the people we interacted with. With the kids at VACC Camp it also made us appreciate even more how blessed we were and helped us really put our petty day-to-day problems into the proper perspective when seeing the challenges these kids and their families faced every day. Yes we invested the talents that God gave us to serve and perform for VACC, but it was all of us, and me especially, that received the blessing of the love and closeness felt from all of the participants, patients and hospital staff at VACC.



Gisel Prado
Recreation Therapist II
Miami Dade Parks Recreation and Open Spaces Department

VACC camp has conducted their Spring Camp from the AD Barnes Park Leisure Access Center for the past 30 years. As loyal and valuable customers, their campers, families, and staff have enjoyed all of our Park amenities returning back every year for more new and exciting experiences. The staff dedication and enthusiasm is noticeable and it's truly amazing what they do for the campers. I commend them for the wonderful work they do!! Congratulations on your 30th Anniversary!!!

Gonzalo Del Rio
Director of International Tour and Travel - North America
Hard Rock International

Hard Rock Cafe Miami is proud to be a long standing community partner of VACC Camp. We have found our involvement with this program, not only to be personally fulfilling, but also a great morale boost for each and every one of our employees and partners that help make this lunch/party a reality. Since 1971, our mission at Hard Rock has been to "do well by doing good" in our local and global communities. We believe that this endeavor is an active demonstration of our company values and our staff commitment to better their community.

LOVE ALL – SERVE ALL TAKE TIME TO BE KIND ALL IS ONE

The volunteers, parents and VACC Camp KIDS, are a reminder of the things we can achieve every day, no matter the obstacles! We look forward every year to host this event. Our employees line up to be selected to participate.

Dr. Simpson is a great humanitarian and an inspiration to all of us. I had the opportunity to work with him on this event for the last 10 years, and see firsthand the love and devotion that he has for each and every one on these kids.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate and create memories that will last a life time.



Gonzalo Del Rio, Dr. Moises Simpson and Nara Azevedo in 2017 (Sales and Marketing Manager at Hard Rock Café Miami)

Graciela Valdes, CPP
Plum Blossom Photography

VACC Camp is absolute magic. Love, Compassion and Friendship envelope the camp itself and the resulting joy is palpable. Cheers, laughter and gratitude hang in the air along with music and merriment. Camp is a tidal wave of dynamic energy – and it is impossible to tell who gets the most out of it: the campers, the volunteers, or the families. I suspect, however, the happiest camper there is Dr. Simpser. It has truly been an honor and a privilege to photograph various camp events over the years and, for that, I am eternally grateful.



Grizzy Miller, RN
President
PediStat and PediPec, Inc.

From my earliest years at Pedi Stat I have been awed and driven by your example of taking your skills and abilities and using them to impact the lives of your most complex patients in a real, meaningful and sustaining way. You and your VACC camp staff have set the bar so high for all of us. We, the healthcare providers who strive to provide more than medical services for our patients, will always live in your shadow.



Harry R. Horgan
President
Shake A Leg Miami

Dr. Simpson is a Dream Maker! His passion for people, his skills for healing and his loving friendship empowers us all. Shake A Leg Miami was created to provide a place where people with disabilities and their families can find hope, friendship and happiness. A place we they can go sailing and feel the freedom of being on Biscayne Bay. When we started, people said you can't take people with disabilities sail because they are going to get hurt. Dr. Simpson came along and said, will you take my kids in wheelchair and on ventilators sailing? I questioned, kids on ventilators? He said no problem, we have a team and together we will launch these kid's dreams!

Thank you Dr. Simpson for showing us the way; for creating the opportunities for high school kids to learn important lessons by helping kids with disabilities. For providing opportunities for parents to have fun with their kids and see them smile. For kids with disabilities to make friends and participate in activities they never believed were possible. For the dynamic team you have put together and community you have created. Because of you, we see life differently and dream bigger dreams. We have a support system to help us during difficult times and to turn our dreams into reality. Thank you for your vision, energy and ability to create a caring community. We are all better because of you.

With all our love and admiration,
Harry, Susie, Eli and the Shake A Leg Miami Team.



Harry at Shake a Leg in 2016 with Dr. Moises Simpson



Harry at Shake a Leg in 2016 with our camper Greta Baier and his beautiful dog



Harry at our 30th anniversary celebration with camper Dylan Picariello



Harry with Dr. Simpson and videographer Dan Perez

Enrique "Henry" Menendez
HNO Productions, Inc.

As VACC Camp continues to bring a fun environment to children, we have been given the opportunity to be a small part of their lives. We enjoy bringing happiness to them through entertainment and music. We look forward to the excitement we can bring and are truly grateful for the experience.



HNO DJ's in action at Hard Rock Café event in 2015

I have loved being a part of VACC camp for the past several years. Bringing smiles to the faces of the students, the volunteers and the parents has given me tremendous joy. I hope to be able to participate in many more years to come. ☺



Lisa and the group with camper Brittnay Dupont, and her cousins.

VACC Camp, I have had the extreme pleasure of performing educational wildlife programs for VACC Camp over the last 18 years. You guys are by far my most favorite group to do! Even the animals are always on their best behavior because they feel nothing but good vibrations from all of you. We always feel a warm welcoming by the staff, volunteers and most of all the kids. Every time I leave and head back to Palm Beach I always feel blessed by your group’s inspiration, bravery, courage, dedication, selflessness and most of all LOVE.



HNO DJ’s in action at Hard Rock Café event in 2015



Mark receiving a plaque from Dr. Simpson



Mark with the beautiful bird and our camper Elena Perez

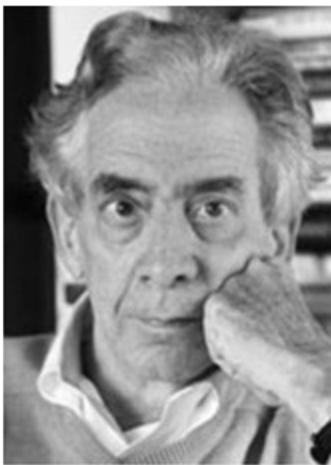
My name is Mayra Santana and I have worked for Miami Dade County Parks since 1990. From 1991 until 2009 I had the pleasure of coordinating the VACC Camp dates at A.D. "Doug" Barnes Park-Disability Services. Throughout this time it has been a pleasure watching how Dr. Simpser, Bela Florentin and the entire MCH-VACC Camp team have selflessly devoted their time and most importantly their love to this unique camp. Through the years I have seen returning campers, new campers and countless numbers of volunteers that have also dedicated their time to assist children on ventilators have rewarding and perhaps once in a lifetime experiences for their Spring Break. It is overwhelming to see them in action and I would encourage everyone to be part of this magnificent experience. Thank you for allowing me (in a very small way) to be part of the greatness that is VACC Camp!



Celia Leyva, Dr. Simpser and Mayra Santana at VACC Camp's 20th Anniversary Celebration

The first time I heard about VACC Camp was in 1987, while watching a local news report on WPLG by Art Carlson. One little girl in particular made me want to know more, and perhaps do more. As I recall, she'd been playing VACC Camp baseball, and after a very brief run - grinning all the way - the reporter asked her if she was having fun. She was all out of breath but managed to say "Yes!" and really mean it. Within a week or so I'd met Dr. Simpser and asked if he would let me photograph the next camp, for free. And so it began. For about ten years, from 1988 to 1998, I spent Aprils at VACC Camp, making pictures and delivering prints to campers and their families. It was the best "assignment" I ever had although I never made a cent.

It was especially meaningful given my own family's long history of pulmonary problems. I'd lost two brothers and two sisters to cystic fibrosis (CF), so I knew something about living with ventilators and oxygen and being out of breath. And I had recently been diagnosed with my own "adult onset" version of CF, which made the struggles of those kids and their families especially poignant.



Michael with Dr. Simpser at the Nikki Beach field trip.

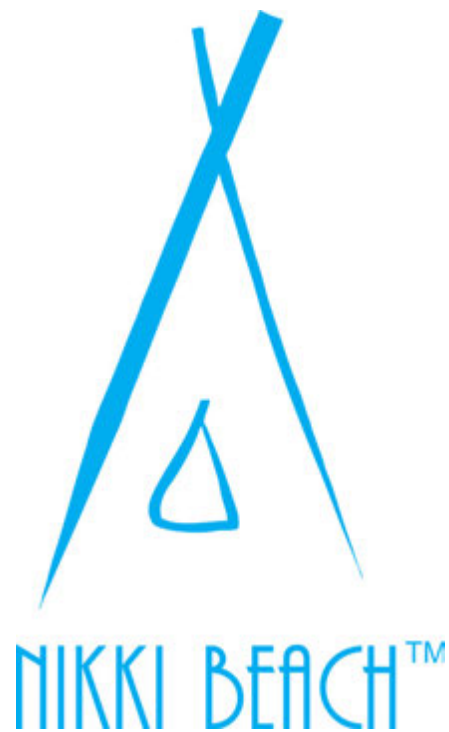
Rosie Carballo
President
Southeast Chapter Columbiettes

I first heard about the VACC Camp at a meeting of an organization I am a member of, the Columbiettes. The Columbiettes are a national Catholic women’s service organization. At the meeting, I heard Dr. Simpser speak and was touched at how passionate and yet humble he was. It was obvious to me that this was a cause that we as Columbiettes could come together and support. Four Auxiliaries from churches in South Miami- St. Louis, St. John Neumann, Our Lady of Divine Providence and Mother of Christ, organized a Bingo fundraiser and we raised \$4,000 for the Camp. We plan on making this an annual event every January. We consider ourselves blessed to be able to help, in a small way, to bring joy into these children’s lives.



Samantha Smith
Catering & Productions Director
Nikki Beach

For nearly two decades Nikki Beach has been fortunate enough to be able to support the VACC Camp. It has been extremely rewarding for us to be able to host these amazing children and their families for a day of fun in the sun. This annual event is something that the children look forward to every year and, in fact, so do we....there is no greater feeling than knowing that for at least a few hours the campers can forget about their woes and just be carefree kids. The fact that Nikki Beach has even a small part in those hours of happiness is quite an honor. The campers inspire us each year to try harder to be our best and remind us all to live in the moment. Our company is all about celebrating the gift of life and hearing the laughter that echoes throughout our property is the absolute best gift.



Samantha receiving a plaque from Dr. Simpser

Susan Coile
Program Director
Bird Bowl

We at Bird Bowl are very proud of our relationships that we have with the various organizations that service disabled individuals.... When Bela contacted us several years ago, and asked that we host VACC Camp (and not really understanding what VACC Camp was all about).... We were truly excited for the opportunity. To see all of the children, volunteers, family members and staff show up with such smiles on their faces and excited for the day, can really humble a person. It was an amazing sight ... and we at Bird Bowl look forward to each year when we can be part of such an amazing Event. You all are to be commended for coordinating such a wonderful week for everyone!



Andy Goodyear
Wheelchair Getaway

Andy with his company Wheelchair Getaways was the first one to help Dr. Simpser initially with loaning him a wheelchair accessible van to pick up and drop a camper family from the airport. He helped us for many years until we had to start using a bus because several campers were flying in and one van was not enough. For at least 20 years of the 31 years of camp Andy was there for camp and we are sure that if we needed him again, he would be there for us.



Andy Goodyear and Catie Ghoe

Disclaimer:

Credit and recognition to all person/companies who have contributed, participated and/or volunteered in Camp may not be complete. To every single person, supplier, special volunteer and/or donor of supplies not mentioned here, we thank you very much for your support and ask you to please get in touch with us so we can add you to the list.

Hospital and Foundation Administration

Alex Soto
Chairman, Pediatric Specialists of America 2018-
Chairman, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital 2014-2018.

I was fortunate and indeed, it was my distinct pleasure to have Dr. Moises Simpson as a friend, colleague and an astute critic. He had a magnificent clinical eye that was equally matched by his analytical mind, compassion and wicked sense of humor.

More than three decades affiliated with Variety Children’s Hospital, then Miami Children’s Hospital and finally Nicklaus Children’s Hospital impelled him to jealously guard the well-being of our institution. Dr. Simpson was never shy about suggesting corrective administrative actions where he felt we fell short of the mark of excellence.

I quickly learned to take his advice and listen to him carefully because of his vast experience and sagacity. Even when we disagreed it was always in friendship and I understood that his only motivation was the care and well-being of our children.

Dr. Simpson was one of a kind and truly the best that humanity offers!



Ambassador Walters

Ambassador David Walters, former Chairman of the board of MCH, and Chairman and President of MCHF, had a vision in the early 1980’s to create a hospital in Miami so that children would not have to leave their city, home and family support to get the very best in pediatric healthcare. It would no longer be called Variety Children’s Hospital but Miami Children’s.

His vision, together with Dr. Ramon Rodriguez-Torres, former Chief of the Medical Staff, became a reality when the dedication of Miami Children’s Hospital took place in 1986. In the Ambassador’s words: “build a better mousetrap and they will come”. Doctors, locally and from around the country, brought their talents to Miami Children’s and the community’s children followed. One of those doctors who brought his special talent, care and compassion for children was Dr. Moises Simpson. His specialty was Pulmonology. But Dr. Simpson was more than just a doctor caring for his patients. He was concerned that his more critical patients who were dependent on machines weren’t always able to enjoy the same adventures and games as their friends, particularly when they saw their friends going away to summer camp. In 1986 he created VACC Camp, a week long, activity packed vacation for his special patients away from home and family, but under the medical supervision of Dr. Simpson and his team. Ambassador Walters adopted the camp and made the hospital responsible and the monies at first came from the foundation. He established an endowment for the VACC Camp and the foundation would match all donations that the camp will obtain with its own fundraising efforts up to \$250,000.00.

Ambassador Walters visited the Camp on many occasions and always came away with a feeling of gratitude to Dr. Simpson for giving everyone – the children, the family members, the doctors, the nurses, the camp counsellors and the volunteers – a euphoric feeling of joy, sharing and camaraderie. Being able to laugh, swim, sing and dance was the best medicine for everyone.

Thank you, Dr. Simpson for bringing normalcy to the lives of these special children.



Ann Lyons

VACC Camp has shown so many people the importance of never giving up, of believing that everything is possible, and what volunteering and donating can mean to the life of a child and their family. Just visit the A.D. Barnes Park on Bird Road and 72nd Avenue one afternoon during camp and you will see everyone enjoying the swimming pool. And I mean everyone. Because of a special ramp and a dedicated team of doctors, nurses and volunteers, a child is able to experience being in the water. Hearing the laughter and screams is music to everyone’s ears. And on another day imagine actually going into the ocean at Nikki Beach Club on South Beach. Pizza parties, Hard Rock Cafe, sailing on Biscayne Bay, are just some of the activities planned for this weeklong camp that has inspired and created lifelong friendships. Medical staff and camp counselors donate their time and talent to making a huge difference in the lives of these special children. And then there are the donors who every year for the past 30 years have helped raise the funds to make this camp available to 35+ children each year at no charge to the families. An annual brunch and golf tournament have helped to raise funds and awareness for the Camp. And then outright donations from corporations and individuals who are compelled to give because of their caring and compassion.

I have been privileged to meet many of these caring individuals, but one stands out for me in different ways. Mike Fernandez has a huge heart who, as the father of five children, knows what it means to have a healthy child. His youngest child on occasion had suffered from asthma attacks and after visits to Dr. Moises Simpser, Mike made several substantial gifts to VACC Camp. On another occasion a patient of Dr. Simpser needed to be evaluated to see if she would be a candidate for a lung transplant, a procedure that was not being done for children in Miami – only in St. Louis. An article about Jennifer appeared in the Miami Herald and Mike called and offered to cover the expenses of the trip – airfare, hotel, per diem, and arranging for oxygen tanks to be made available during the flights. Jennifer and her father made the trip, however it was not to be – Jennifer was too sick to survive a lung transplant, but through medical expertise and caring family and staff Jennifer survived past her 16th birthday. Thank you Mike Fernandez for opening up your heart and your pocketbook for the VACC Camp children.



Ann Lyons with Dr. Simpser and Esther Simpser, at the VACC Camp 30th anniversary celebration

Annia Martinez
Diamond Society Membership Specialist
Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Foundation

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Simper in 2007 while working in the Global Health Department. Although we worked together for many years, I will never forget my first encounter with him. He asked me to go to his office to review a patient’s medical record together. When I walked into his office, my first impression was how extremely intimidating and serious he was, almost like “a grumpy old man” I thought to myself. He was so serious and did not even crack a smile. However, soon after I learned behind that serious face was a great loving physician and a great human being who loved and cared deeply for his patients. During my time at Global Health Department, I had the honor of working with many patients and families along with Dr. Simpser. One particular patient comes to mind, Mariana Acosta. During one of her many visits I scheduled Mariana for a Pulmonology consult and that is when she was introduced to VACC CAMP, Dr. Simper and his amazing team. The camp gave her and her parents and so many others something to look forward to every year. For that week, they are one big family and are transported to a very special place. It allows the children to experience and do things they never thought possible regardless of their medical limitations. It brought them so much happiness, so much hope.

Dr. Simper made it all happen; he was loved by many families not just local but from all over the world. Families that would come seeking hope. Families that will forever be grateful to him. His profound personality is memorable and I will always cherish him.

Dr. Simper will remain forever in our hearts and VACC Camp is exactly as Mariana calls it “a Magical Place”.



Edgar Estrada
Senior Medical Photographer
Nicklaus Children’s Hospital

Throughout 26 years, I helped Dr. Simper and his wonderful team with photography and graphics requests at the hospital. Additionally, I was fortunate to visit the camp to photograph the annual group photos. Dr. Simper’s dedication and positive attitude was infectious to all the staff at the camp. What I will always remember was his way of telling it like it is while finding a humorous angle. But most of all, no matter how long it had been since he saw you he always made you feel like a friend.



Jackie Gonzalez, DNP, ARNP, MBA, NEA-BC, FAAN
Senior Vice President/Chief Nursing Officer/Patient Safety Officer
Nicklaus Children’s Hospital

Many years ago Moises Simpser arrived at Variety Children’s Hospital in Miami and one of the first things he asked me for was a Nurse Practitioner to work with his patient population. Why that may not seem like such an unusual request, it was at the time. He was a pioneer in the early use and support of the Nurse Practitioner role within the organization. With his vision and tenacity, he dreamed and planned to build a camp for children with special needs and ventilator support where they could enjoy just being a camper. He tirelessly garnered financial support and volunteers and created experiences such as the beach, the pool, sailing, outings, campfires and many more that allowed families to normalize what can be a very challenging world. He also built an army of teenage volunteers who came back year after year and many entering healthcare careers from his inspiration and influence. He was a wonderful friend and colleague and always with a passion for his work, although he did not consider it work. I am blessed to have enjoyed working with him in my life and so happy that he knew the Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp was named in his honor. He would be proud to know his legacy lives on.



Janet Bell Taylor, MBA, CPHM
Director
Patient Family Services, Social Work & The Michael Fux Family Center
Nicklaus Children's Hospital

As a mother of a young adult with special needs and advocate, VACC camp and Dr. Simpser have always had a special place in my heart. It took a physician like Dr. Simpser, full of strong will and empathy to create a “One of a Kind” summer camp for children needing oxygen and/or technology to support breathing.

Just imagine: A camp where a child with special needs can enjoy outside summer activities and gatherings in a totally inclusionary setting with their siblings, other campers, volunteers, and medical staff!

Throughout the years I have had the honor to work with Bela and Dr. Simpser and my only wish is for Dr. Moises Simpser VACC Camp to continue it's national success by bringing more happiness to campers and their families!



Joanne Bogdon-Diaz
Nicklaus Children's Hospital Foundation
Office Supervisor - Development

Throughout my 24+ years with our institution's foundation, I had come to know Dr. Simpser during his late afternoon visits to the Foundation offices. His wit and charm was always a great way to end the day. Moises reminded me of the pediatrician who was always there for my family as I was growing up – kind, generous and with a great sense of humor. Even though he is not here, Moises will be with us in our memories and through the continuing accomplishments of the VACC program.





November 25, 2016

Dear Friends,

I am writing to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Moises Simpser and his team for the amazing work they do every year organizing and hosting VACC Camp, a free week-long overnight camp for ventilation assisted children (children needing a tracheostomy ventilator, C-PAP, BiPAP, or oxygen to support breathing) and their families.

Since its inception in 1986, this camp has become a beacon of hope for more than 180 families, some of whom have traveled from 27 states and three countries to participate. I have been personally touched by the experience, having attended the camp for several years during my tenure as President and CEO of Miami Children's Health Foundation. This past spring, I had the opportunity to volunteer, along with my teenage son Nick, and through the activities planned we were able to interact and get to know some of the patients.

I will never forget Maylan Chavez, a special camper we had the great pleasure of getting to know that week. She is currently attending Florida International University and is working on becoming a psychiatrist. Although her very life depends on being connected to a ventilator 24 hours a day, she is one of the happiest people I have ever met. As she openly expresses, this camp "breaks down the boundaries and proves to everyone that it is unnecessary to live in fear of others because of how different they appear to be." Maylan is living proof that VACC Camp can change a person's life, perspective and future – and that is cause for celebration.

Congratulations once again to Dr. Simpser and his team! Your unwavering commitment to help others is an inspiration to all of us.

Best regards,

Lucy Morillo Former President & CEO
Miami Children's Health Foundation

VACC Camp is an inspirational, if not magical experience. To see the families and children have memorable excursions and make new friends is something that has left an everlasting imprint on me and all who have witnessed camp. It is no wonder families return year after year as do the volunteers and caregivers and physicians. I have been touched by this incredible camp and it has been an honor to have been able to promote its impact on our community and beyond.



Email received by Dr. Simpser and –partners on March 26, 2016

Good Afternoon Moises, Maria and Tony –

I want to extend my sincerest congratulations on the 30th Birthday Celebration for VACC Camp. While I have attended the annual celebration previously and played golf once before in your tournament, last night takes the cake without a doubt. The celebration was spectacular, from the decorations to the food to the agenda. I was thoroughly impressed by all aspects and commend you and the entire team responsible for making last night a reality. Incredible.

But more importantly, I want to recognize the absolutely phenomenal work and success you have had in building a nationally recognized VACC Camp. It was evident from the speeches provided by the families and volunteers that this program is a South Florida gem for families with ventilator-dependent children. To say I was touched last evening would be a major understatement. I was incredibly moved by the entire event. Not only as an administrator, but as a father of two young boys (one in particular who had challenges post-birth putting us in our CICU for 7 days), I can only imagine what a refuge and comfort VACC Camp is for the little ones and their families.

Moises, you in particular are a huge inspiration. The care that you’ve provided in our community for decades deserves outstanding recognition. I think in many ways last night was the perfect venue for such recognition, including the proclamation by our own Mayor Carlos Jimenez and the Board of County Commissioners. We all go through life, personal and professional, searching for what our individual legacies will be that we leave behind in memory for others to build upon. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Pediatric Pulmonology Practice you all dedicate your lives to daily AND this phenomenal VACC Camp are a part of the legacies that all of you will someday look back upon with pride for bringing to our community.

I thank you all for what you’ve done and continue to do to serve Miami Children’s Health System, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, and South Florida. Moises – your words last evening were moving. The fact that during some of the most challenging days in your entire life you found the energy and courage to stand up in front of hundreds to speak is a testament to who you are as a person and why likely so many individuals in that room aspire to be you one day. You are a force for positive change and I personally congratulate you on the wonderful accomplishment celebrated last evening.

It’s my pleasure to be able to work closely with all of you. Continue what you do because you are truly making a difference.

Best Regards,

Michael



VACC Camp holds a very special place in my heart and gives people hope and the importance of never giving up. Working closely with Dr. Moises Simpser, Bela and the many VACC Camp volunteers reminds me every day why I chose to make it a life-long career choice of being a fundraiser. It has been such a pleasure to fundraise funds in support of the camp for the past 9 years here at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital. It’s because of the very dedicated and special team of doctors, nurses and volunteers, a child is able to participate in experiences they might not have been able to otherwise. Volunteers from the clinical team at the Hospital and camp counsellors donate their time and talent to making a huge difference in the lives of these special children.

It’s because of the very committed donors who have supported the camp for over the past 30 years, we will continue to make this camp available for the 35+ children and their families to participate at no charge. It is my personal goal to continue to raise funds and awareness in memory of Dr. Simpser in support of the many families who have benefitted from the love and devotion from this very special man.



Michael Mowatt with Ann Lyons and Iris Cicero one of our many years volunteer at camp



Nancy Humbert, ARNP, MSN
Executive Vice President
Nicklaus Children’s Hospital

I had the honor of meeting Dr. Simpser back in the late 90’s when I was a school nurse with the Department of Health.

Moises was always on a mission to advocate for each individual child and for children collectively. In his determination to improve the quality of life for children with asthma, he developed and coordinated a multi-organizational team to work with the schools with the most asthmatic children missing school frequently.

One of the first things he shared at an early meeting was his passion for quality of life and his cherished VACC Camp. He never missed an opportunity to talk about it and recruit support for it. He saw VACC camp as that chance for children with vents and other pulmonary challenges to enjoy the fun on the water and other exciting venues. When I came to NCH in 2007 and attended the camp I saw for myself the pureness of it; the joy for the children and those supporting it. I recall one of the early media stories covering not only the mission for the children but also the value of volunteers; especially the many university students lending a hand.

Moises, we all miss you; it was an honor to work alongside of you!



Pietro Bonacossa
Senior Director, Foundation and Grant Giving
Nicklaus Children’s Hospital Foundation

VACC Camp is one of the most beloved and treasured programs at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital. For many years I enjoyed working with Dr. Simpser and his team by helping to secure grant funding in support of the wonderful activities offered to campers and their families. Dr. Simpser’s passion for the program was paramount for its success and the many smiles it continues to bring to ventilation-assisted patients. He leaves behind a tremendous legacy that continues to this day.



If anyone wants to add their testimony to the book
they should write it and email it to
bela.florentin@nicklaushealth.org.

Disclaimer:

Credit and recognition to all person/companies who have contributed, participated and/or volunteered in Camp may not be complete. To every single person, supplier, special volunteer and/or donor of supplies not mentioned here, we thank you very much for your support and ask you to please get in touch with us so we can add you to the list.