



When a child is seriously ill, the entire family is affected. Normal life comes to a grinding halt and all family members struggle with the devastating turn their lives have taken. Birthdays and holidays are forgotten, siblings come home to an empty house because mom and dad are at the hospital, and everyone has the overwhelming sense that they are completely alone.

For more than 30 years, Starlight Children's Foundation has been dedicated to helping seriously ill children. Starlight's programs have been proven to distract children from their pain, help them better understand and manage their illnesses, and connect families facing similar challenges so that no one feels alone. As we reach the halfway point of another year of service to children and families, we are excited to share a mid-year review with you that summarizes our program activities and recent achievements.

Outpatient Family Activities - *Great Escapes*™ family activities and *Day Brightener* events provide families a chance to have fun together away from the hospital so they can relax, make special memories together and return home with a renewed sense of strength and hope. The events also forge important connections between families struggling with similar issues so that no one feels alone. At the events, children partake in all types of activities, including those that they enjoyed prior to their illness and new activities they are experiencing for the first time. **Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 Starlight hosted 72 *Great Escapes* events in New England and provided 396 tickets to performances and sporting events as part of the *Day Brighteners* program, serving more than 2,573 seriously ill children and their family members in our communities.**



Hospital Programs - *Fun Center*™ mobile entertainment units, *Hospital Happening*® events and *Starlight Site*™ playrooms, teen lounges and care rooms provide entertainment to fill the hours in hospitals or treatment centers with therapeutic fun -- distracting children during long or painful medical procedures and lessening their feelings of isolation. Specifically, the *Fun Center* program has been hailed by hospital staff as a "lifesaver." During long waiting periods or difficult treatments in emergency rooms, outpatient clinics and hospital rooms, *Fun Centers* calm and occupy children while easing staff and parental concerns. **Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 we placed 3 *Fun Centers* at New England area hospitals. Each unit will serve approximately 486 pediatric patients each year. Additionally Starlight has hosted 27 *Hospital Happenings* events and maintained our commitment to working with and providing support to 60 hospital partners throughout the region.**

Online Programs and Communities - Delivered via online games, ezines, webisodes, a comic book and websites, Starlight's online programs help sick children understand common hospital procedures and manage illnesses and injuries such as cancer, sickle cell, cystic fibrosis, asthma, Crohn's and colitis, severe burns and kidney disease. In addition, Starlight's *Starbright World*® online social network for seriously ill teens and their teen-aged siblings connects kids who are going through similar experiences so that no one feels alone. Members chat; document their stories; journal their thoughts; express themselves through photos and personalized profiles; describe their experiences; and have fun participating in contests and playing games. **Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011, Starlight focused on opening Starbright World's membership to non-English speaking teens. The social network now offers Spanish and French translation support and Starlight is actively reaching out to Spanish and French-speaking teens who are dealing with long-term illnesses and hospitalizations.**

2010-2011 *Great Escapes* Moments

April



We started our calendar off with a bang by taking 74 children and family members out for dinner and a **Red Sox Game Great Escape!** Families enjoyed a pre-game dinner to meet and re-connect while children enjoyed games together and created posters to cheer on their favorite players before we headed over the stadium as a group. Yes, the Sox won that night!

"For many Starlight children this is their first ever Red Sox game," says Kelly Duda, Senior Manager of Program Services. "Attending a game and dinner is often not affordable for a family with ill children, not to mention dealing with the stress of planning for wheelchair seating, dietary restrictions, managing the crowds and parking for oversized vehicles. Starlight and our donors take care of everything for them."

Later in the month, Starlight New Hampshire visited the **McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center** where more than 40 children and family members enjoyed a private educational show in the planetarium. Following the show children enjoyed lunch and a special starry craft, providing the opportunity for families to meet and connect with one another.

In addition to these events Starlight provided **215 tickets** to children and family members to attend a **Boston Bruins Game, Boston Ballet Coppelia, Aleppo Shrine Circus, Smuckers Stars on Ice and the Ringling Brother Circus** in Rhode Island.

May

In May, Starlight hosted a **CPKids Camp Field Day Great Escape** which invited families to spend the day playing indoor sports, springing in two huge bouncy houses, and enjoying face painting, balloon twisting, delicious snow cones and an all-you-can-eat California Pizza Kitchen buffet. Sporting games led by California Pizza Kitchen Volunteers were tailored to include all children regardless of their physical abilities, including adapted sack races, egg and plate balancing, ring toss, mini golf and more!

In New Hampshire, Starlight hosted a special crafty afternoon at an intimate **Time to Clay Great Escape** for 19 children and families during which Starlight provided a chance to relax, connect and get creative in the studio. Lunch and dessert completed this artistic day.



In addition to *Great Escapes* events, Starlight provided **50 tickets** for children and families to attend a **Red Sox Game** in Boston **and an Alan Jackson Concert** in New Hampshire.

June

The summer is a busy, busy time for Starlight! In June, we took our annual trip to the **Franklin Park Zoo for an African Safari Great Escape**. At the event, more than 45 children and family members shared in a fun-filled day complete with a warm lunch, private tour of the zoo and its exhibitions, goodies and a special animal encounter where we were able to pet and touch live animals!



In New Hampshire, 68 children and family members made their way to the **Storyland theme park** where children mingled with known storybook characters, enjoyed rides, and delighted in childhood scenes from their favorite books and cartoons.

"It was great to get Brittany out of the house and see her having fun, so thank you for that! It turns out she's not too old for Storyland," said one Starlight mom. "I was so impressed with their wheelchair access. The event was well thought out so everyone could enjoy themselves. I wish more places were as easy. Thank you for a great day and again for all of your hard work and dedication. Our family appreciates your efforts. We had so much fun!"



Also in June, more than 100 children and family members dug out their cowboy boots, hats and spurs to spend the day riding horses, meeting brave cowboys and participating in special "Little Buckaroo games and activities" at a **Great Escape Rodeo**. Families enjoyed the star treatment with lunch, clowns, hayrides and two ponies dedicated to meeting and greeting Starlight children.

"The staff was terrific — they introduced the cowboys, ponies and even came over with the bull riders and a cowgirl to meet the kids in their wheelchairs and posed for pictures," remembers a Starlight mom. "My kids loved everything! It is all they talked about for at least a week. My son thought it was 'the coolest thing ever — thank you!"

Back in Boston, Starlight hosted the fourth annual **STARmazing Race**, a city-wide scavenger hunt that is both a fundraiser and *Great Escape* event. Each team is tasked with collecting clues and completing unusual challenges. One Starlight child exclaimed, "This is by far the best Starlight event ever!"

In addition to *Great Escapes* events, Starlight provided **78 tickets** for children and families to attend a special screening of **The Karate Kid**, the show 'Walking with Dinosaurs', a **Red Sox Game** and **amusements parks** in New Hampshire.

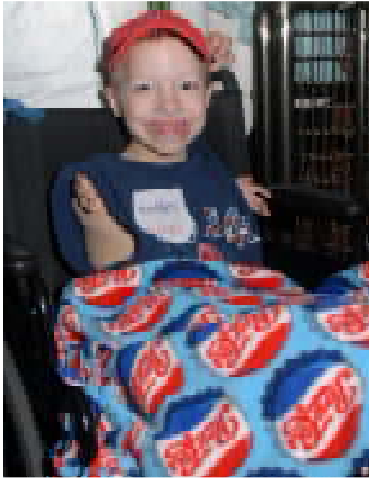


July

Starlight chartered 3 amphibious Ducks for a special **Duck Tour Great Escape** for more than 80 children and family members. The tour started at Starlight's offices where children enjoyed a lunch buffet, specialty duck crafts and the opportunity to have their photo taken along side the famous ducks.

"The best part of the event was the excitement on our son's face," said one Starlight dad. "It was also very nice being with other families that have children with medical problems. Thank you for great coordination, a beautiful day, a funny driver and easy parking!"





Then to stay cool, Starlight arranged for 71 children and family members to enjoy a full day at **Water County** in New Hampshire. A favorite *Great Escapes* event for many; children and families spent the day at the park, partook in a private BBQ, and participated in arts and crafts under Starlight's own pavilion.

In addition to our *Great Escapes*, Starlight provided **15 tickets** for children and families to attend the ***Despicable Me*** movie premier and a **summer concert at Fenway Park**.

August

In August, Starlight hosted a *Great Escape* at **York's Wild Kingdom** in Maine. We welcomed more than 100 children and families to enjoy a family day complete with lunch, ice cream, paddle boats, a petting zoo, elephant and pony rides, games and go carts!

"Families love this park it has something for everyone and everyone can move at their own pace, making a nice easy summer day for everyone," said Jonelle Prill-Tate, Community Development Officer.

A summer wouldn't have been complete without a trip to **Canobie Lake Park**. 54 children and family members attended the event. The event kicked off with a private BBQ that brought families together to connect and share while enjoying a hearty lunch before they headed out to the park to enjoy rides and water slides.

In New Hampshire, Starlight hosted a Game Day *Great Escape* at the **Fisher Cats**, where 56 children and family members attended a Sunday brunch with games, crafts and a special surprise visit from the Fisher Cats mascot. After brunch, the group headed over the stadium to meet with players, take the field and throw out the first pitch!

Just before the summer came to close, Starlight hosted 40 Starlight children and family members for a mini golf and ice cream *Great Escape* adventure at **The Orange Dinosaur Mini Golf Park!**

September

Starlight was able to combat the back-to-school blues with a fun-filled *Great Escape* trip to **Six Flags** amusement park. More than 140 Starlight children and family members enjoyed a private BBQ lunch in a special picnic grove area, unique activities and admission to Massachusetts' largest amusement park.

"I just love being a part of Starlight; seeing families interact and take a break from the daily demands that serious illness can bring is just amazing," said *Great Escapes* Coordinator Lynn Belkin, "Families had such a great time!"

In Rhode Island, families embarked on a magical adventure for a **Toy Story 3** *Great Escape* at Disney on Ice. Families received dinner, fun gift packs and admission to the event.



In New Hampshire, nothing helped kids get over their end-of-the-summer-bummer like a trip to **Santa's Village**. More than 50 Starlight children and family members handed in their Christmas wish lists early to the big guy himself at this Christmas-themed amusement park. Families ate lunch together as a group, went on a sleigh ride, fed reindeer and visited with Santa!

New England families also enjoyed more than 100 tickets to the Broadway hit **Wicked**, the **Bruins Rookie Games**, and more!

October

To start the festivities for fall Starlight welcomed 50 children and families to enjoy a day at **Davis Farm Land** where they shared a BBQ lunch under a private tent, decorated pumpkins and participated in wacky field-day type challenges. After lunch, families headed into the Davis Mega Maze to find their way through the corn maze and make new friends at the petting zoo.

In New Hampshire, in celebration of **Starlight's Great Escape Program Anniversary** over 100 families came together to socialize, play video games, billiards, and shuffle board, create arts & crafts, have their face painted, and enjoy cookie decorating. To add to the excitement families were entered into a raffle to win prizes, and all families went home with a Starlight tote bag filled with board games, Sworski Disney pins and tree ornaments, and DVD's!



Also in October, across New England Starlight provided 250 tickets for children and families to attend the world famous **Ringling Brothers Circus**.

"We love to be able to meet other families, and enjoy a fun afternoon together," said a Starlight mom. "Thank you!"

November

This month Starlight arranged a trip to the **New England Aquarium**; this is was a popular event welcoming 158 children and their families to experience a world under the sea. Families had the opportunity to explore the aquarium on their own and hands a on experience with tide pool animals. To make sure the day was complete Starlight provided a warm lunch, parking and gift bags for each family. "We had an amazing time out the children were in love with the penguins and fish, we always enjoy spending time with our family and the other families we have met through Starlight. Thank you!!!!" –Starlight Parent

In New Hampshire 50 children and families sweetened the fall with a behind-the-scenes look at how ice cream is made at the **Cold Stone Creamery** in Manchester. The event began with a healthy lunch, and then families sped off to the creamery for a tour and the opportunity to create their own insane ice cream creations on the cold stone!

December



To ring in the holidays Starlight families enjoyed a magical night out for the **Boston Ballet's Nutcracker**. The night welcomed 49 children and families for a pre-show dinner, desserts and themed arts and crafts at the Hyatt Regency in Boston, then attended the performance! What a night!

Starlight closed out the year with a super special **Holiday Party**, welcoming over 170 children and families for a glorious afternoon at Jillian's Boston. Children and families enjoyed a bountiful lunch, cookie decorating, themed arts and crafts, bowling, billiards, clowns and the opportunity to meet Santa and collect a holiday gift. Each child received a gift from their own wish list, Starlight partners with local companies to have each child sponsored. This is always a special afternoon that families use to celebrate a year together, and hope for a good year to come.

Throughout the month Starlight also provided 130 tickets to local events including a **Bruins Game, Tis the Season, Cinderella's Tea** and a **Enchanted Village**, and in New Hampshire tickets to a **Christmas Carol**.



January

Starlight families started the New Year off with a **Celtics game!** Welcoming 75 children and their families Starlight arranged a pre-game dinner at Boston Beer Works before the group headed over to cheer on favorite players at the TD Garden! "The whole night was awesome! The fact that our daughter, who's in a wheelchair, got to go to her **FIRST** Celtics games was amazing. Everything was perfect thank you" commented a family that recently joined Starlight.

In New Hampshire, 74 children and their families enjoyed dinner and a night at the rink to watch the **Manchester Monarchs** take on the Bridgeport Sound Tigers! Families had the best spots in the house, including a special opportunity to watch the game from a 14-person party suite and Gold Level seating, directly behind the net where the Monarchs shoot twice. The event was topped off with a memorable foam puck for the Chuck-A-Puck portion of the game, and a visit from the team mascot!

Starlight mom commented "Thank you, the boys enjoyed a night out with their father to see a hockey game and feel special. It was awesome as their special needs brother gets all the attention. Thank you for the chance to get out and about when we normally can't."

February

For February Vacation in Boston Starlight hosted a dual weekend event at **Plaster Fun Time**. Over 60 children and their families joined us for a yummy breakfast and nice afternoon of creativity where everyone had the opportunity to pick out pottery, paint it, and have it glazed.

Also this month Starlight took over **Build-A-Bear Workshop's** in Providence Rhode Island and Manchester New Hampshire inviting 152 children and their families to spend the afternoon creating teddy bears complete with name and costume. Then families, and bears, enjoyed a nice warm lunch together. This was an extremely popular event, and received wonderful remarks from families.



"Thank you so much. We have five children and Jack would never be able to have this experience. It means so much to him and to our family for him to have it. He goes through so much pain and suffering with his conditions, this was such a special experience. We, of course, want to do everything for him, we just can't afford it. Thank you so much to you (Great Escapes Coordinator Colleen Ramsey), your volunteers, and donors for this special foundation!"



Keeping families warm but still entertained Starlight provided 192 tickets to exciting indoor events such as the season favorite **Mary Poppins, Disney on Ice, a Monster Jam, and a Bruins Game**. Also in New Hampshire 50 children and their families enjoyed Italian Style dinner and a **Disney on Ice** show.

Starlight Dad commented "We had a blast and it also gave us some good family time that we could not have fit in our budget, Thank you so much for making my daughter's birthday one to remember!"

Great Escapes have been designed as a direct response to the needs of seriously ill children and their families. Families have openly shared and have repeatedly stressed the intrinsic value of the Great Escapes and we have translated that information into a valuable community-based respite program. **As a result of Starlight's unique program and underserved audience, Starlight continues to expand program participation, and this year alone has welcomed 132 new families (587 children and families) to the New England Great Escapes program.** This growth demonstrates obvious and urgent need for programs that alleviate sick children's isolation, and for family support programs that help parents and siblings meet other families, have regular socialization opportunities, and identify sources of mutual support to help cope with life with a severely ill child. Starlight's Great Escapes program is time-tested and proven to help alleviate some of the stress associated with the myriad impacts of serious illness—overwhelming isolation, financial burdens, and information deficiency or overload—and allow children and their families to better focus on the child's health and recovery.



Thank You!

We couldn't have helped Starlight families make so many special summer memories without your support! Thank you for brightening the lives of so many deserving children and families. We are in the process of planning an exciting calendar for 2011-2012 and look forward to sharing it with you very soon!

