

SUMMER 2011

# kids alive

support for children  
of parents with cancer



## Our Mission

To serve children ages 6 to 16 by helping them adapt to the trauma of a parent's diagnosis of cancer.

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*Kids at play following the reunion dinner*

## Year in Review

It has been an incredibly busy year! In July 2011 we celebrated a 15-year reunion for children and families who have come through our program. The event was held at Hudson Gardens and was a lovely evening all around. The weather was nice, the venue was delightful, but perhaps most enjoyable was seeing those children and families and sharing memories. They do grow up and life goes on, despite what they have faced in their younger years. (If we plan another reunion, we will have to ask the kids, at least, to wear a picture of what they looked like when they were in Kids Alive. There was a lot of, "Now tell me who you are," because they have grown into such nice young adults!) Several parents shared how grateful they were that Kids Alive was there for their children at such difficult times. This was a predominant theme among parents.



*Volunteer Seth Reiner, MD, and family at the Kids Alive Reunion*

Having just completed our 16th year, we have known for a very long time that Kids Alive makes a difference in the lives of families; however, until now, we have not studied it objectively or attempted to define how it helps. Lorraine Hart, PhD, a psychologist who joined our staff in 2008, designed and implemented a pilot study to research the program's effects on communication and family dynamics. We are in the process of analyzing the data we collected four times during the year from parents and children, and we will keep you posted.

The 2010-2011 group has been the largest ever! Thirty-eight children started with us last fall, and that number grew to 47 by June. Ninety-two parents and children attended the first family dinner. By the end of October we knew we needed to divide the group. We did, and each child continued to receive the individual attention they are accustomed to receiving in Kids Alive.

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## Year in Review

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The trip to Snow Mountain Ranch was its usual grand success, with 57 children and volunteers making the trip this year. The kids had a great time, of course. Not a minute goes by without the realization that we could not do what we do without our volunteers — and never more than on this annual trip.



*The Family Hero's Journey*

We closed out the year with Gail Opsahl, art therapist; Susan Hess, music therapist; and The Family Hero's Journey. At the closing meeting in June, there was much discussion among parents and children with respect to where they were on their Journey, who were their Dragons, and what they were doing to learn to either coexist with or slay the Dragon. This is always a very moving discussion in which the difficulties faced and the courage to face them are so apparent.

So we take a deep breath and immediately begin to gear up for next year! By July, 25 children already had enrolled for the 2011-2012 group, and we have yet to enter the time of the year when we typically receive the most applications. Many heartfelt thanks to all of you who support us in so many different ways, through gifts of time and/or money. Please know how grateful we are.



*At the Kids Alive Reunion, from left: Sarah, Stacey, Tanya and Tyler Wolverton*



*From left: McKenna Nolop, Madeline Nolop, Tony Nolop, Deb Anderson, Dave Anderson, Robin Mower, Tiffany Pinklage and Michaila Nolop*



*From left: Carey Ungvary, Janie Cao and the Joseph family: Renee, John, Allison, Jillian and Austin*

## My Favorite Things Kids Alive 2011 version

*By Rodgers and Hammerstein (and adapted by Susan Hess, music therapist)*

Chocolate and candy and sock monkey playmates,  
New ducks in springtime and my Kids Alive friends,  
Italian dinner and cows in the grass,  
These are a few of my favorite things.

Horses in green fields and ribbons and bow ties,  
Shopping on weekends and bacon for breakfast,  
Friends and my family and swans on blue lakes,  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the dog bites,  
When the bee stings,  
When I'm feeling sad,  
I simply remember my favorite things  
And then I don't feel so bad.



# What Kids Alive Can Do

by all the kids at Kids Alive, April 2011

## Love is so powerful...

Love is a ridiculously powerful bond  
Love can let you know someone is on your side  
Love is fuzzy and warm like a giant hug  
Love can give you Hope!

## Hope is so powerful...

Hope is your support system and allies  
Hope can help you walk through it  
Hope is never giving up  
Hope can save lives!

## Faith is so powerful...

Faith is comforting  
Faith can help you feel strong  
Faith is the belief that anything can happen  
Faith will never die!

## Peace is so powerful...

Peace is courage and caring  
Peace can paint a picture in your mind  
Peace is powerful and can spread  
Peace can solve problems and soothe people's worries!

## Friendship is so powerful...

Friendship is nice and warm and yummy  
Friendship can protect and comfort  
Friendship is playful, and supportive when you are down  
Friendship can blossom and grow!

## Memories are so powerful...

Memories are something to look back on  
Memories can sustain us  
Memories are things that build more memories  
Memories can build faith in what we believe!

## Courage is so powerful...

Courage is when you defeat something  
Courage can be trying new tactics  
Courage is doing something that scares you  
Courage can be taking a deep breath and pretending!

## Spirit is so powerful...

Spirit is trust, and keeps you powerful and uplifted  
Spirit can keep you alive, both spiritually and mentally  
Spirit is mysterious like the Ghosts of Christmas  
Spirit can make you happy and give you courage!

## Meet Our Music Therapist

**Susan (Susie) Hess, LPC, MT-BC, FAMI**, is a licensed professional counselor, board-certified music therapist and a Fellow of the Association for Music and Imagery. Since 1998, she has been working in the local cancer community as support group facilitator for women with ovarian cancer. She joined Kids Alive as music therapist in 1999. Susie maintains a private music-psychotherapy practice in Evergreen and has offered local, national and international workshops on music for health and wellness.



*Susan Hess*

**IN SUSAN'S OWN WORDS:** Gail Opsahl, BFA, MA, and I met as the first Expressive Arts interns at QuaLife Wellness Community in 1997. We were both students at Naropa University doing our third-year internships, Gail in art therapy and I in music therapy. We had a wonderful partnership that year in which we offered workshops combining the two modalities. Gail invited me to join the Kids Alive team in 1999 after she had been working with **Jeanne Currey, RN, MN**, and **Madelyn Case, PhD**, for a couple of years. Even though we don't work directly together at Kids Alive sessions now, we creatively weave the theme of The Hero's Journey through our time with the kids. Once a year I load up my car and bring enough instruments for 30 or more people to Kids Alive. We drum, sing and play through original songs, and make up our own words to Rodgers' and Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things." I always leave feeling satisfied, knowing that we have had a chance to process the non-verbal subtleties of the cancer experience together, through the power of music. It has been a real pleasure working for so many years with such a great program and such a devoted and exceptional team. Thank you!

# Speaking from Experience

Kids Alive's **Carey Ungvary**, adult volunteer, and **Sean Eagen**, junior volunteer, were presenters at the State Volunteer Meeting in April. Carey spoke about how she got involved with Kids Alive and the experience of having her daughter, **McKenna**, join her as a junior volunteer. Both Carey and McKenna give so much to our program. The kids love them both and really gravitate to them. Sean spoke about his experience of his dad being diagnosed with head and neck cancer and going through treatment, and he himself picking up extra responsibility at home and coming to Kids Alive when he really did not want to. During the year he found out he could be a junior volunteer at age 14, he very enthusiastically said, "Sign me up." Sean has been an exceptional volunteer. He refers to the junior volunteers as generation gap fillers — and they are, indeed, that and more. Again, thank you so much to each and every one of you.



## Funding Opportunities

Kids Alive relies on charitable contributions from individuals, as well as grants from foundations. Every donation makes a difference and allows us to continue to offer our services to children whose parents have cancer. While there is no charge to any family who wishes to participate in Kids Alive, the actual cost of the nine-month program is approximately \$1,500 per child. We are anticipating that we may have as many as 50 children for the coming year. The cost for the Snow Mountain Ranch trip by itself is close to \$10,000. If you or your family wish to make a donation, please, please use the enclosed return envelope.

If you have questions about making a charitable gift, please call Ed Ammon, executive director of the Porter Hospital Foundation, at 303-715-7617. Thank you for your consideration.

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