

CAMP RED

REALIZE EVERY DREAM MAGAZINE

CAMPER LIFE

What I need to know
about being a camper

**Just what the
Doctor Ordered**
Dr. Jon Gayken, MD

MEET THE STAFF

Get to know the
people behind the mission

ARE YOU READY?

A Day in the Life of a Camper



A Letter from our Founder

Within these pages we have tried to capture the vibrancy of the burn community and how we wrap around the survivor, the family and the many caregivers required.

One thing a survivor knows is that staying positive is so important. Having a support network around you is important. Feeling seen and heard while you process emotions is important.

We hope that everyone who walks through the doors of our Transitional Healing Center feels welcome. Whether you are a patient family, a donor, a volunteer or a first responder and there is a place for you here. We can all help each other.

Forever thankful,

Jake LaFerriere

Founder & Executive Director





Hey!

I just wanted to drop you all a quick note and say "thank you!"

You (all) took an anxious, apprehensive kiddo and didn't let it deter you. I am so very grateful for the compassion shown to him. He was quite sad that camp was over and was planning next year before even leaving.

Had it not been for his connections with Andrew and Tasha, I don't think he would have participated in much of waterfront. Without Roger's unwavering support, encouragement, and patience, he may have not even made it through day 1. Nurse Angie's "go with the flow" completely chill demeanor definitely helped with his meds as he doesn't like to/want to be different or have others know he needed them.

Through parent group, conversations with Melissa and Dr. G, I was smacked across the face with the realization that I have buried, instead of dealt with, his incident and also, once again realized that even though on the day to day it seems that he is "okay," he is still very much coping as well. Baby steps!

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart for embracing him/us. You are amazing people and are doing God's work. Being a part of this family was not something we chose, but I am beyond grateful to be here.

Thanks, again!

Janelle
First time Camper Family, Summer 2022

WHAT IS CAMP RED?

Camp RED, which stands for Realize Every Dream, is a 4 day residential camp program for 6 - 16 year olds who have survived burn trauma. Whether your camper was burned recently or years ago, we recognize that you may be in the process of embracing the changes and challenges that come with recovery. We want to help!



Camp RED gives 6-16 year olds the opportunity to live beyond their scars and to be kids again. Our hope is that time at Camp RED will help campers and parents/guardians/siblings Realize Every Dream for a better tomorrow!



You and your camper will be surrounded by other families who have shared experiences and similar injuries, feelings, fears and concerns. It does not matter what state you live in or what hospital provided your trauma care, you are welcome at Camp RED.

Our caring volunteers want to support you, celebrate each camper and encourage emotional healing with a variety of outdoor activities in the most beautiful setting. Campers will create new friendships and memories to last a lifetime!



HOW DO I APPLY?

Register for Camp RED online by visiting our registration page at www.campred.org



WHAT DOES IT COST?

Camp RED is free for any child affected by a burn or trauma. We also host one immediate family member as space allows. We consider the immediate family to be a parent, legal guardian, or sibling. We will provide bus transportation to and from camp at no additional cost. Parking is available at the Minneapolis pick-up/drop off site. Families are also welcome to join us directly at Camp Knutson, in Crosslake.



WHO SUPERVISES MY CAMPER?

If an adult accompanies your camper, then the primary supervision will be that adult. However, each group of campers will be assigned a cabin counselor to supervise, engage with the campers and siblings, build cabin spirit, and make each moment special. We have Medical staff to administer medications, provide first aid, and make any necessary medical decisions regarding your camper's care. Camp Knutson has staff on site to lead activities and provide assistance. All staff members and volunteers are thoroughly trained and have passed a comprehensive background check.

WHERE IS CAMP RED?

Camp RED utilizes the beautiful grounds and dedicated staff of Camp Knutson in Crosslake, MN. Scan here for a virtual tour.





Experience can change your perspective, and your course in life. That's just what it did for Dr. Jon Gayken, a surgeon with the Hennepin County Medical Center Burn Center. He treats people, young and old, who have burns, frost bite or wounds that require skin grafts, surgery, or other care. It's his own experience that led him back to where he himself was treated.

Dr. Jon Gayken is a familiar face in the halls of the HCMC Burn Center. It's where he did his residency, and where he's been a surgeon for more than a decade.

Rewind to when Dr. Gayken was just Jon, a 17-year-old who loved football. Nurse Pat Anderson

and Dr. Gayken have known each other for even longer. Their initial relationship was nurse-patient.

He was diagnosed with a rare blood infection.

"It's a form of meningitis. The bacteria gets into your blood stream and causes a systemic effect. Blood vessels in my arms and legs and some other areas, the scar on my forehead are my marks where part of me died," Dr. Gayken said.



The way to treat the potentially deadly infection was through skin grafts at the Burn Center.

"Being a young, scared kid I actually at one point asked one of the nurses, I was like, 'Am I going to die,' because everything was sort of happening around me," Dr. Gayken said.

He said about 40 percent of his body died. His hands, arms, legs and a few spots on his face. This otherwise healthy 17 year old needed to learn to walk again.

"No matter what you go through after that, you remember they emotions," Dr. Gayken

said. It's this traumatic experience as a teen that led Jon to become a doctor. And more specifically a doctor who would treat patients like him.

"It sort of became my identity and my purpose. It's like, well this happened to me so that I could go and be a doctor and take care of people," Dr. Gayken said.

He realizes he treats some of the sickest patients in the hospital. And the injury may be the most significant thing to happen to an individual or family, as in his case. And so Dr. Gayken's approach reflects that.



"Because I remember what it was like and still know what it's like to deal with those emotions and feelings. You know it when you see it. And so when you see people struggling you can kind of see what they need. That they're ready for the conversation of, 'Hey, this happened to me,'" Dr. Gayken said.

There's a point in the doctor-patient relationship that he pulls back his sleeves to reveal his scars.

"I show them the bumps just to give a little bit of legitimacy to what I'm saying. A lot of times it just changes our relationship," Dr. Gayken said. They trust me and you can understand why. Patient Christopher Shueler admits it changed his perspective.

"I think it's awesome. Can't get any cooler than working in something that you've been through. Period," he said. Dr. Gayken said there are still hard days, but the good far outweigh them. And it's that notion of the future he wants to instill in his patients. "You're going to have fewer of those hard days as time goes on, and it's going to be OK, even though it doesn't seem like it right now," Dr. Gayken said.



WHAT ARE MEALS LIKE AT CAMP?

Meals are served family-style with a variety of options to satisfy anyone with food allergies and restrictions. In your application, you can make clear any concerns or needs for the kitchen staff. Snacks are also provided in the afternoons and evenings. However, we discourage bringing outside food and drink to camp.



WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A DAY AT CAMP?

The day begins at 8:15 am with our traditional Flag Ceremony. After breakfast, everyone participates in various morning activities including horseback riding, archery, canoeing, fishing, arts and crafts, support groups, nature walks and more. The afternoon is a mix of free-time and waterfront activities: swimming, tubing, stand up paddle boards, games and more. Then, everyone is off to dinner and an evening of fun all-camp games with family and/or cabin mates before bedtime. Songs, campfires, costumes, and silly games are found all throughout Camp RED. We even have a few special guests, so expect some surprises too.





“Over the last 5 years, our son Tyler has had more than 100 surgeries and procedures. We are so thankful for the energy and generosity of Jake and Firefighters For Healing. They have brought Tyler toys in the hospital to help as a distraction, invited our family to Camp RED, allowed the use of the apartments on multiple occasions, and provided meals and gas. This has lifted the financial strain on our family and inspired all of us to stay positive. Thank you!”

- CAMP PARENT

“Firefighters For Healing welcomed our daughter who was burned on 68% of her body when she was 3 years old. I felt very alone in this process after she was burned before I met your team. You have been there for us in more ways than I can put into words. The love and emotional support you have blessed us with has been outstanding. Thank you for all of your selfless, heart filled acts which have supported our family through this ongoing process of healing physically and mentally. You are truly our heroes!!”

- CAMP PARENT





Hi, my name is Nicole and I have been a Camp RED counselor for five years. I was burned at the age of six but that was not my initial connection to camp. In the summer of 2018, I was finishing up a psychology internship at Camp Knutson and that is when I learned about Camp RED...

My favorite thing about Camp RED is going horseback riding in Pine River and meeting new campers and their families. I enjoy watching the kids make new friends during our daily activities and waterfront time. I also enjoy connecting with the kids and their families on a personal level. Every year I look forward to going to camp and seeing how much these kids have grown!

**-Nicole ,
Camp RED Counselor**



In 2017, we were invited to Camp RED as a camper and support parent. Gabe was 15, and only one-year out from the accident that caused his burns and injuries. We arrived nervous and unsure of what to expect. But we left with lifelong fun memories, new friends, and an extension to our burn family....we've been a part of Camp RED ever since!

Now in 2023, six-years later, Gabe has moved into his role as a burn survivor counselor to Camp RED campers, and Melissa is a peer and parent support.

Camp RED changed our lives forever and gave us the hope, support, and courage to Realize Every Dream IS possible!

With Love, Gabe and Melissa

Jake LaFerriere
Founder



Jeff Larson
Camp Director



Chris Dunker
Board Chair



Dr. Jon Gayken, MD
Medical Director



Tasha Holifield
Assistant Director



Angie Whitley
Health Professional



Andrew Young
Assistant Director



The Camp RED Team

Camp RED is an amazing team that is dedicated to providing a loving and caring environment for all attendees. Their commitment to creating a safe and fun-filled experience for everyone is truly inspiring. The team's passion for making a positive impact in the lives of these children is evident in everything they do. With their unwavering support and encouragement, the campers are empowered to overcome their challenges and have the time of their lives. The Camp RED team is a shining example of what can be achieved when you combine dedication, love, and caring with a strong desire to make a difference in the world.

Firefighters For Healing's Transitional Healing Center "A Home Away from Home"

From bunk beds and s'mores in the woods to fresh linens and ice cream in the cities, we have a place for you! In 2023, Firefighters For Healing opened its Transitional Healing Center – a 12 suite, fully furnished, emergency housing program that also provides a healing space for families to utilize when a loved one is receiving care in a Twin Cities Burn Center.

Located a short walk away from Hennepin Healthcare, the Healing Center provides a 'home-away-from-home' for our campers, soon-to-be-campers, their families, and the first responder community.

Should your camper need care in the Twin Cities area, this healing space is here for you – no matter how far away 'home' may be.





Participating in Camp RED as a parent is a source of great pride and meaning that exudes the very best character of our community to me and my family. The importance of camp to the children and parents cannot be overstated.

This pleasant experience provided the very best of Minnesota values actualized at a good and safe place that promotes positive interaction, counseling, and supervision. Our family and new

friends absolutely loved, appreciated, and needed it.

Among countless unforgettable memories with the children and parents, a deeply personal and emotional one was watching my nephew openly and publicly exposing his scars before jumping in the lake - without concern of his physical appearance - while also partaking and leading in numerous activities with the brightest smile on his face. This had not happened since he suffered his injuries years prior. Through his display of joy and confidence in activities, it became apparent that a major burden and cloud of physical stigma had been lifted. He could be a confident and bold kid again and charter his own path forward and any undertaking he chooses without fear.

Camp RED is a place of true healing. Including my nephew, I witnessed first hand kids who were self-conscious and





alienated develop social skills and rediscover themselves in a normal healthy manner. I saw kids reassured and reinvigorated by volunteers, counselors, loving adults and peers. They were empowered and no longer minimizing their potential and abilities through their scars and the perceptions of others - especially "the few mean kids at school".

Camp RED provides a place where burn survivors do not feel alone to

fight and overcome their individual struggles - struggles which might have otherwise taken years to overcome.

This community gives them a break from feeling 'other'. We are so proud to be part of this healing community.

***Sincerely,
Fedell and Erin***



Highlight Videos



Like Jake, I come from a family of firefighters. My father was a Minneapolis and Bloomington firefighter, serving for a time with Jake in Minneapolis. When he passed in 2018, my family was in search of an organization to direct memorials to, and with his love for the fire service and kids, Camp RED and Firefighters for Healing just made sense. If you haven't had an opportunity to meet Jake yet, he can aptly be described as a magnetic personality - someone whose passion is contagious and who brings out the best in those around him. When he asked if I would be interested in contributing to Camp RED, it didn't take much convincing.

As excited as I was about Camp RED that first summer, nothing - not even Jake's impassioned talks and enthusiasm - could match the experience of being there. The absolute truth about Camp RED is that the activities of camp - the fun and games, horseback riding, waterfront, singing, dancing - all come second to the sense of belonging, of family, and of care for one another that exudes from sharing the activities, and a bit of ourselves, with one another. That is where the healing truly takes place. That feeling is true for our campers, their family members, staff, and volunteers alike. It's what carries us the rest of the year until we come together again.

Camp RED is the people who come together for one another; laughing and singing, embracing and sharing, healing and hoping.

Words simply don't do it justice. So I invite you and yours to join us and experience Camp RED for yourselves.

Forever thankful,

Jeff Larson

Camp RED Director



WE INVITE YOU TO DONATE!

Funding for our Camp RED program comes from generous donations of all sizes. If you are able to help a young burn survivor and their family experience the laughter, songs, friendship, waterfront activities and healing of Camp RED. We welcome donations of any amount. We your generosity, a campers hope and smile are restored.



Questions?

Please contact us at info@firefightersforhealing.org

