

Best Camp Friends –

Lilly and Ayva



On July 4, 2022, after nearly two years not seeing each other face to face, best friends Lilly Hartman and Ayva Delainey reunited on the grounds of Camp Easter Seal at Little Manitou Lake. Having planned well in advance, the girls strategically recruited Lilly's mom, Teresa Hartman to make a very important phone call to ensure the girls would be in the same cabin for their week-long reunion and anticipated friend shenanigans, inside jokes, and camp adventures!

Deep and meaningful friendships are fostered at Camp Easter Seal. For many youth like Lilly and Ayva experiencing disability, Camp is an opportunity to meet and bond with peers who face similar challenges and barriers in the everyday world. Most importantly, friendships made at Camp don't just stay within the 100 acres of lush green grounds at Little Manitou Lake. As campers go back home, they often find ways to stay connected before they meet again the following summer!

Initially, acquaintances and sledge hockey teammates, the girls' bond grew as their friendship blossomed at Camp – thanks in part to Paul Hartman. "Lilly's dad was the first to mention Camp to us; how Lilly had been going for years and how great it was. We really had never considered sending Ayva before then, and I wasn't super familiar with Camp Easter Seal. But we did some research. That first year we were really nervous to send Ayva so we stayed close to Camp at my parents' farm outside of Watrous. The staff said Ayva would call us – well, she never did! I guess she didn't have time to think about us, which was great," laughs Tracy Delainey as she recalls Ayva's unintentional parent snub during her first visit to Camp Easter Seal in 2017.

For the Hartman family, Camp Easter Seal has been a familiar place for years. Not only has Lilly attended since the age of six years old, but her grandfather, John 'Tank' Stochmal was a camp counselor in the early years at Camp in 1957. "There has been no other place aside from Camp Easter Seal where we feel that she is fully taken care of and I don't have to worry about her," admits Teresa. "When we send her to Camp, counselors and staff are there because they want to be and they are excited to take care of your kids."

You have the opportunity to help create lasting friendships by ensuring access to Camp Easter Seal. Your donations cover the cost of sending kids, youth, and adults experiencing disability to Camp for a care-free, fun, and adventurous time! As you are reading here, the impact of Camp extends far beyond campers – it provides families like the Hartman's and Delainey's much-needed respite with the peace of mind that their children are well taken care of and of course, having the time of their lives!

With a two-year age difference between them, Lilly (17) and Ayva (15) share similar interests in sports and several favourite camp activities like aquatics and getting messy in arts and crafts. When it comes to their personalities – the two are distinctly different,



They have a friendship that everybody dreams of. The girls might not talk to each other for a month, yet, they meet up at Camp and just pick up right where they left off. "

TRACY DELAINEY,
Ayva's mother

which works perfectly for their relationship! As best friends do, Lilly and Ayva encourage each other to try new things and step outside of their comfort zone, which is always easier to do when you know someone has your back! "At Camp we can do different things together than just play hockey, I learn more of her interests and she learns more of mine. There's more one-on-one time to just hang out without our parents...which is my favourite," admits Lilly, laughing while glancing over at her parents who are nodding in agreement.

Fostering close friendships is a pillar of Camp Easter Seal, such bonds are not just special, they can be lifelong and life-changing. "Lilly and Ayva are such great people and seeing their friendship flourish at Camp is truly amazing. They are

both already bright beacons in this community and I think their friendship just enhances that. I can really see them, as they grow older, becoming amazing advocates for individuals experiencing disability and doing so together," exclaims Jennifer Christian, Office Administrator at Camp Easter Seal.

Sincerely,

Ian Wilkinson,
Executive Director



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