

What's Behind the Wonderland Camp Fee?

Sometimes people ask why we have to charge campers a fee to come to Wonderland Camp. We know they and their families tend to have greater expenses than typical campers and paying a camp fee can be challenging for them. The short answer is: Wonderland Camp serves a *unique* population whose needs *must* be met so we can give them the time of their lives.

Wonderland Camp must provide and pay for the crucial medical services our campers require.

- Almost all our campers have underlying medical conditions. In fact, the vast majority require prescription medication. On average we dispense more than 5,000 medications each *week*. This process demands we hire at least two nurses (one of whom must be an RN) who can be on site 24 hours a day when campers are at camp, along with more nurses to fill in during the week. We also hire and place a certified medication aide in each cabin to make sure medications are passed properly; these aides require training at a cost to the camp.
- Campers can join us as early as age 6, and they never get too old for camp. Every year we welcome some campers who are in their 60s and 70s! As anyone ages, co-morbidities set in, like Type II diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and many others. These diseases typically result in even more medications and monitoring by our clinic team.
- Of course we also purchase *over-the-counter* medications, the full gamut of first-aid supplies, and emergency equipment such as an AED machine, gurneys, etc.

Wonderland Camp needs to provide more and better-trained staff to keep our campers safe.

- Our campers need a smaller ratio of campers to counselors than typical campers. Some even require continual supervision and have a 1:1 ratio. The remainder fall into our 3:1 ratio. Typical camps have ratios of 12:1. Safety is imperative and therefore we must hire additional staff to meet our ratio goals. Parents tell us that they choose Wonderland Camp because we have these small ratios, and they trust their children will be well supervised and well cared for.
- Our recruiting process for summer staff is extensive and our standards are high. Our paid year-round camp director allocates a lot of time to hire the best young people we can find. Then we pay for a full week of face-to-face training for all of them so they'll have the knowledge and skills needed to take care of individuals with disabilities.
- Beyond the general staff, we select five to seven people and pay for up-to-date training and certification in handling disruptive behaviors. Our campers at times will have behaviors that escalate, and this training assists in diffusing issues and maintaining safety.

Wonderland Camp provides temperature-controlled buildings so our campers stay healthy.

It's not unusual for our temperatures in Missouri to reach the 90s or higher. Our campers often can't tolerate being in the heat for extended amounts of time and need frequent breaks. We must be very aware of heat exhaustion. Accordingly, all buildings at Wonderland Camp are air

conditioned (and heated for the cooler temps in fall and spring). As a result, our electric bill is a constant and large expense on our books.

Wonderland Camp handles laundry to meet the higher levels of sanitation our campers need.

- We don't want bedbugs to close camp and make our campers miss their favorite week of the year, so we provide our own bedding to decrease the chances of those pests showing up. Of course that's a lot of laundry to do every week, requiring extra staff and giving our main corps of washers and dryers short life spans.
- Our campers soil their sheets and clothing more often than typical campers, and we launder incontinence pads and Hoyer Life slings. Thus our counselors do laundry daily using additional washers and dryers inside each pair of cabins.

Wonderland Camp must take special diets especially seriously.

- Many campers have *very* special diets. These can include diabetic, soft, mechanical soft, and pureed, as well as gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan. These diets take time and people to prepare. Some products have a higher cost to meet the needs of our campers.
- We try not to let tube feeding prevent a camper from attending, so we spend money to hire and train extra staff who can provide this service, too.

Wonderland Camp proudly offers adaptable equipment that makes camp accessible to all.

- We have adaptable bows for archery, specialty chairs to go up and down the rock wall and ropes bridge, and an easy-entrance swimming pool and splash pad.
- Each cabin is equipped with a hospital bed for campers who require their heads raised or to be lifted into bed. We also have Hoyer lifts and specialty shower chairs for nonwalkers.
- Concrete paths throughout camp make it much easier for wheelchairs to move about independently.
- Our wagon was custom-made for camp and includes a ramp and wheelchair lockdowns to move people to the lakefront. They board our pontoon boat that also has lockdowns.
- Many campers don't have the energy or ability to walk from one side of the camp to the other. Because of this, we buy and maintain six or more golf carts to transport them to and from activities.

The Board of Directors and year-round staff at Wonderland Camp enthusiastically spend a lot of time doing fundraising activities to cover as many of these hefty costs as we possibly can. The fee we charge is as low as we can make it and still provide a truly safe and unbelievably fun experience for our favorite people in the world...our amazing campers and summer staff.