



He was one of our first 27 campers. Now he and several of our original campers are inspiring younger children with food allergies! It's the Circle of Camp, and you can help it continue.

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The Story of Grizzly*

** Grizzly is his camp name....He chose it when he moved up from being a camper to being a counselor. All the adults at camp are called by a camp name.*

Like many children with food allergies, Grizzly's first summer camp experience was with Camp Blue Spruce. The camp week started in late August, so Grizzly missed his first week of school. It turned out to be the right decision for him as he found camp to be an experience he wouldn't trade for anything.

At the end of that very first session back in 2013, we asked the campers what their favorite parts of camp were. Grizzly said, "high-fiving my friends in the lunch room." Grizzly couldn't high-five his friends during lunch at school, but at Camp Blue Spruce, he could!



Grizzly in 2013

Grizzly also appreciated the freedom to go through the lunch line and choose any food he wanted. As he and his new friends sat down at a table together in the dining hall, he was amazed at how GREAT the food tasted. It wasn't your typical "allergy-

free” fare. It was food like everyone else eats -- lasagna, turkey dinner, and plenty of scrumptious desserts! Everyone was able to eat together at the same table and everyone was safe. He didn’t need to put up a protective wall between his plate and those around him.

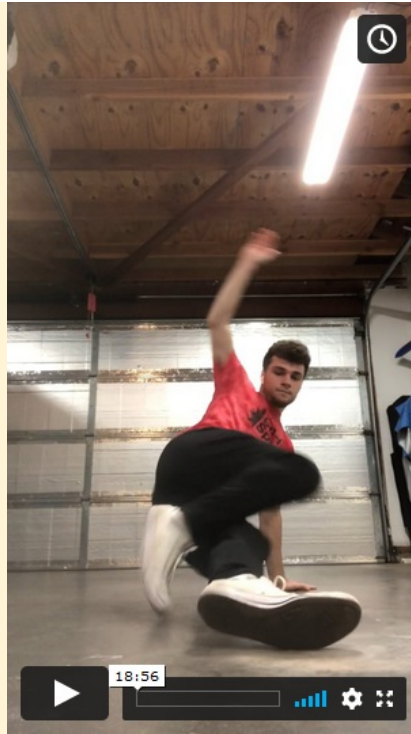
Throughout his first week at camp, Grizzly enjoyed not worrying about his food allergies and he and his friends could just let loose. The typical anxiety surrounding explaining to new friends about your food allergy and how you need to stay safe was not front and center.



Grizzly and his fellow CITs in 2019

When he and other campers did actually talk about food allergies, it was eye-opening and provided Grizzly with an awareness and empathy for his fellow campers, some of whom had really struggled with difficult experiences. They shared Epi-pen stories and confided in each other about various bullying and social difficulties they had faced. These shared experiences gave Grizzly a sense of belonging and access to a community of caring friends, who would be with him for many more years to come.

Grizzly attended Camp Blue Spruce every year. He ALWAYS missed his first week of school, and even brought text books to camp, though they were rarely opened. As he got older, he started to notice and enjoy watching the new campers arrive at camp. It was pretty cool to see first-time campers, high-fiving their new friends as they went through the lunch line. He enjoyed the times when campers of all ages came together at night around a campfire.



Grizzly teaches break dancing virtually in 2020

With his years of experience, Grizzly decided that he could have a powerful impact and a valuable perspective as a Camp Blue Spruce counselor. We completely agree! He remembers admiring his own camp counselors as a young camper and now he is a positive role model showing campers what it is like to be an adult with a food allergy, not to mention teaching them how to break dance! As a counselor, he has incredible insight as to the likes and dislikes of every age group at camp because he has walked in their shoes. He helps kids realize that they are not alone, and that there is a whole community of kids facing similar challenges. He supports kids who come to camp anxious about the food or anything else regarding camp week. All of the positive messages become so much more special when they are being delivered by someone like Grizzly, who has attended camp himself for years.

We are very excited to have Grizzly as a member of the Camp Blue Spruce team. He makes magic happen for the campers in his own unique and energy-busting ways. We can't wait for new generations of campers to meet him and learn from him.

Thank you, Grizzly, for your dedication and buoyant attitude!

Eight summers ago, "Grizzly" was a member of the first group of campers to attend Camp Blue Spruce. Now he's a fantastic camp counselor. Your financial donation pays counselor salaries and ensures that fun, knowledgeable and empathetic

counselors, like Grizzly, are around for many summers to come.

THANK YOU!!

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