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/'karita:s/ (noun) love of humankind, charity

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Volume 4 Issue 3


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where hope and healing happen



Therapist Aimee Nakamura supports a child in The Children's Center Therapeutic Preschool.

Being a parent doesn't come with a handbook and, for that matter, neither does being a kid. It can be hard to know what to do in the best of times, and when families are facing the worst of times, a little bit of help and guidance can go a long way.

That is exactly what The Children's Center is designed to provide. A non-profit with locations in both Salt Lake City and Kearns, The Children's Center provides comprehensive mental health-care to children from birth to age 6, as well as their families and caregivers.

"We focus on the relationship between the child and their caregiver and really help caregivers understand cues and needs and how to respond to the child," said Jennifer Mitchell, senior program and operations director at The Children's Center. "That sets them up to succeed with whatever hurdles or challenges they might experience later."

Families can find their way to The Children's Center for a variety of reasons. Sometimes families come to The

Children's Center because a child isn't making progress in a direct intervention service such as speech therapy or occupational therapy and they don't know why. Sometimes families are referred by a pediatrician or a daycare or preschool teacher.

Whatever the issue is that first brings a child and family to The Children's Center, the clinical staff takes a trauma-informed approach to addressing and resolving it. That means clinicians don't wait for a family or child to disclose a trauma; they start any kind of therapy with the assumption that trauma could be contributing to whatever surface issue the family has come to address.

"Right from the beginning, we

establish a way of being with the family that creates a safe space for talking about some of the things they might have experienced," Mitchell said. "Gradually what we can identify is that underlying issue."

And sometimes that can take a while.

Cassandra (last name withheld to protect her privacy) was first introduced to The Children's Center when she and her husband had a foster child placed in their home who was already receiving therapy there. Charlotte (name changed to protect her privacy)

had been removed from her home at the age of 6 and, very soon after, had been diagnosed with PTSD. After three foster homes and one kinship placement that didn't work out, Charlotte came to Cassandra and her husband

when she was 7.

"There were all sorts of things that came from the trauma she had endured, the neglect and abuse," Cassandra said. "In her mind everyone had given up on her so quickly because of something she had done wrong. I was very glad that she was already established at The Children's Center and we could get working right away."

The early days of Charlotte's therapy were a challenge, Cassandra said. Sometimes Charlotte would hide. Sometimes she would cry the entire session. Sometimes she would refuse to leave the waiting room. But, Cassandra said the therapy team made sure Charlotte was always in control. And they kept going back week after week.

Because of The Children's Center's family-centric approach





Therapeutic preschool classrooms remain small so that children can receive individual attention and support.

FROM page 3

to therapy, Cassandra always got something out of the sessions even if Charlotte didn't participate. With no experience as parents before Charlotte was placed with them, the couple was always grateful for some help and validation.

"My husband and I always looked forward to it," Cassandra said. "We would always go in there with the things we didn't know how to handle, and we would always leave with the tools we needed to make it through the next week. She was processing emotions and processing things that had happened to her and, at the same time as she was talking, we were learning how to respond to those things."

For example, Charlotte would often lose control when she was at home. One day she kicked a hole in the wall. At the next therapy session, Cassandra said she couldn't understand why this kept happening, and Charlotte broke down.

"She told us she felt like she was in limbo, that she didn't know where she belonged," Cassandra said. "Everyone else had given up on her and she thought we were going to do the same thing. And we realized this is why we were doing this. We had to break the cycle."

Another time Charlotte lost control when Cassandra sent her to her room and Cassandra and her husband couldn't understand why she had reacted that way to what seemed like normal discipline. Through subsequent therapy sessions they learned that, in

previous homes, Charlotte's room had not been a safe place. Bad things had happened to her in her room and being sent there was a trauma trigger.

So Cassandra and her husband created a "happy place" in their home — a small tent with some of Charlotte's favorite blankets and stuffed animals — where she could go when she needed to take a little break.

Now 10 years old, Charlotte can



Therapist Jacob Brushaber-Drockton offers a supportive hug to a child in therapeutic preschool.

tell on her own when she needs to "take five." She is thriving in fifth grade and she has been adopted by Cassandra and her husband. She learned not to give up, and that's a lesson that parents need to learn, too, Cassandra said.

"There are lots of parents who are embarrassed that their child needs extra help or who feel that something with their child because of something they did," Cassandra said. "But if you are not willing to get that extra help, then who is? You are your child's best advocate."

Teaching parents to understand and advocate for their child is a huge part of the family-centric outpatient therapy that happens at The Children's Center. The team of more than 80 full-time and part-time employees includes PhDs, psychiatrists, doctors and plenty of skilled positions in-between.

"People in the community understand that this is where you can come to get the absolute best care for your young child," said The Children's Center CEO, Rebecca Dutson. "Every member of our team is working to support the children and change the trajectory of the child's life and the family's life."

That team also works to train other providers — both in the state of Utah and in other states — in their evidence-based trauma-informed approach, so families in need can receive the highest standard of care, no matter where they live.

And, as part of its offerings here in Utah, The Children's Center also operates a therapeutic preschool. The preschool is an ideal place for children who have been struggling in a group setting — or who have been kept out of group settings because of behavioral issues. At the therapeutic preschool



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Senior Program and
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GIVING STUDENTS A HELPFUL HAND THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Cigna applauds the outstanding efforts of Junior Achievement of Utah on behalf of students throughout the state. We're honored to work with Junior Achievement on programs including their experiential learning site, JA City, where students build such skills as critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving. Together, we're creating a stronger, healthier future.



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FROM page 4

children can practice social skills, work on behavior modification and incorporate individual treatment plans into their learning and play.

The Children's Center offers all these programs to an average of 2,000 families a year on a \$1.5 million budget that comes from grants, sponsorships and in-kind donations. The Children's Center accepts private insurance and Medicaid, and costs not covered by insurance are subsidized through the grants the organization receives.

One long-time partner of The Children's Center is Cambia Health Foundation, the foundation arm of Cambia Health Solutions. The foundation provided The Children's Center with a three-year, \$310,000 grant in 2013 to help the center provide trauma-informed training to clinicians around Utah. More recently, they provided a \$50,000 grant to support a comprehensive study on children's mental health being conducted by The Children's Center in conjunction with the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah. The study will be released Oct. 8 as part of a virtual conference on children's mental health.

It is an issue that many people in Utah don't recognize, said Kathleen Pitcher Tobey, who is incoming chair for The Children's Center board of trustees and director of operations at Cambia Health Foundation.

"There's a great misunderstanding. Trauma is very prevalent in our community," she said. For example, one in five kids in Utah classrooms has been the victim of sexual or physical abuse. "But the impacts of trauma go under the radar. People aren't aware of it."

The more the impacts stay under the radar, the more severe and long-lasting they become, Dutson said, which is why The Children's Center is also dedicated to informing and educating policy makers, legislators, educators and the business community about the importance of the work they do. By putting in the work early, communities save themselves a lot of work and expense later.

And survivors of childhood trauma are better prepared to contribute to that community themselves. Not only does early therapeutic intervention help children's mental health, it also improves their physical health. Victims of trauma are more likely to suffer from chronic disease and are at a higher risk for early morbidity. Addressing their trauma early helps them live longer, happier lives.

"You not only change and save lives," Dutson said, "you are giving these children the chance to grow into contributing members instead."



Curriculum in the therapeutic preschool includes typical preschool subjects, based in relationship-building and emotion regulation.



Therapist Liliana Jimenez and Therapeutic Specialist Chris Dewey talk to children about emotions and feelings.



Jennifer Mitchell, senior program and operations director at The Children's Center, interacts with a child during a family therapy session.



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Members of the Utah Black Chamber of Commerce, from left to right, Danell Goodwyn, Utah County Chapter; James Jackson Jr., treasurer; Cameron Williams, Utah County Chapter; Karen Rodriguez, secretary and marketing chair; James Jackson III, founder and executive director; Nikki Walker, Utah County Chapter; Steven Johnson, chair, attend the 2020 40 Under 40 Awards Luncheon. Photo courtesy of Utah Black Chamber of Commerce.

'We have the power to impact our future, and we're doing something about it'

Steven Johnson has lived all over the country, and getting used to a new place was, well, nothing new. But when he came to Utah, it was like arriving in a different country. Everything from finding food and entertainment he enjoyed to finding a community of like-minded people felt hard.

And, as a black small-business owner — Johnson owns and operates a small collection agency — finding a way to thrive in the state's economy was the hardest of all.

"I found that business success here was based more on who you know than on what you bring to the table," Johnson said.

And with such a small percentage of Utah businesses owned by minorities, getting to know the right people proved a challenge. But things started to turn around when Johnson joined the Utah Black Chamber of Commerce six years ago.

"The Utah Black Chamber has been instrumental in my success and

growth as a business owner," he said. "The Black Chamber allowed me to walk through doors and into arenas that just weren't there for me before."

But more than just helping his business thrive, the Utah Black Chamber also gave Johnson a place to belong and a way to navigate an unfamiliar culture.

"There are people who come here from other places who can't calibrate and navigate life here," he said. "I think the Black Chamber brings the black experience full circle for the people here in Utah."

Founded in 2009, the Utah Black Chamber started with the goal of unifying the black business community

in Utah, said chamber president James Jackson III. Black-owned businesses were scattered around the state without any common thread or organization to bring them together, Jackson said.

And while many black-owned businesses and black employees in the state were surviving, the chamber wanted to see them thrive — and stay. Many businesses and people in the black community were leaving the state eventually, Jackson said, because their progress was stalling. Black employees were not being advanced in their companies, and black businesses were not growing and expanding the way they wanted and needed to.

The Utah Black Chamber helped to bring black-owned business — as well as companies interested in supporting the black business community — under one umbrella. Membership dues help pay for training, community events and online resources such as the Utah Black Pages and Live in Color Utah that advertise chamber members to a wider audience.

But, Jackson said, there was still more work to be done.

"We said, 'Let's give our community more training, more education, more resources, so that there really is no excuse to not promote or support them,'" Jackson said. "We want to give our community the greatest amount of visibility to really thrive here."

To do that, the Black Chamber spun off a nonprofit foundation to provide even more resources and connections for black business owners and



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professionals in Utah.

One such resource is the Leadership Pathways Program, a 16-week development course for black professionals and business owners. The foundation also operates the Everyday Entrepreneur Program, a 10-week small business development course that helps participants turn an idea into a viable business plan. New Pattern Utah is a grant and support program for black women-owned businesses in the state.

“We want to put people through these programs so they can come out thriving,” Jackson said.

Now, the foundation has set its sights on creating a single physical space where all these programs can live and grow. It’s called the Black Success Center.

“I had this vision,” Jackson said. “It was time for us to have an office, a building, a place. It’s going to be the economic development hub for the state’s black community.”

The Black Success Center will

provide office space for companies and nonprofits that don’t have or can’t afford their own. There will be conference rooms for meeting with clients. There will be training rooms for seminars, workshops and roundtable discussions. And there will be an incubator space where business ideas can become a reality.

“The goal is to produce more black businesses out of that space. And more businesses mean more jobs,” Jackson said. “It is going to be all about introducing economic wealth and prosperity into our community.”

The Black Success Center will open a pilot location in West Haven this month and fundraising for the flagship Salt Lake City location is underway. The inaugural sponsor of the project is Western Governors University (WGU). An online university with campuses and students all around the country and headquarters in Salt Lake City, WGU was one of the first organizations to join the Utah Black Chamber, and claimed the first seat on the board of the chamber’s foundation.

According to Bruce Stetar, an associate dean in WGU’s college of business, the university was first drawn to the Black Chamber because they were looking for help addressing the unique challenges facing the school’s black students. For example, Stetar said, WGU attracts more black students than other minority students, but black students are less likely to earn their degrees than other minorities.

“One of our initiatives is to better serve the underserved populations in our communities and in our student population,” he said.

The university sponsors an annual fundraising event, An Evening in Harlem, where they give away a scholarship to the school. Representatives from WGU also help facilitate the Leadership Pathways Program and other training and mentoring events put on by the chamber, the foundation and soon the Black Success Center.

“All of these things are things we are doing because we believe the Utah Black Chamber of Commerce is the right organization to move forward these initiatives to help the members of this community achieve their goals and their dreams,” Stetar said. “We’re finding it’s a great marriage between the vision and ideas they have and the skills and resources that we can bring to bear.”

The ultimate goal of the Black Success Center, for everyone involved, is to increase access to the resources that the Utah Black Chamber and partners like WGU have to offer. The

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

UBC

2009

Formerly known as **ACCEL** (African Americans Advancing in Commerce, Communication, Education, and Leadership) was created to fill gaps of existing Utah Black Chamber of Commerce.

2011

Zion's Bank becomes first corporate member helping ACCEL launch its first event: **Community BBQ at Sugarhouse Park.**

2014

Recruits first long-standing board chairs.

2014

Changed name to Utah African American Chamber of Commerce.

2015

Launched first premier fundraiser for the Utah Black Chamber and consequently the Black Success Center: **Evening in Harlem.**

2019

Officially **changed name to Utah Black Chamber** on February 2019 to be inclusive of all black communities in the state.ic

2019

In August 2019, officially opened its **first committee outside of SLC** in Utah Silicon Slopes tech hub: Utah County Committee.

2020

Started "**Business First Fridays**" series across the state helping businesses understand leadership, grants, mobility and more.

2020

Officially opened **second committee outside of SLC:** Northern Utah Committee.

2020

Launched **SBA partnership program** for small businesses and black entrepreneurs, and announced upcoming **Black Success Center**



LEADERSHIP TEAM

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Founder and Executive Director

James Jackson Sr.
Treasurer

Steven Johnson
Board Chair

Mikell Brown
Chair of Events

Karen Rodriguez La Paz
Chair of Marketing and Communications

Maria Loftis
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Cameron Williams
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Nikki Walker

Danell Goodwyn

Giles Witherspoon-Boyd

Meshell Redmon Long

Loki Mulholland

Aliahu "Alli" Bev

Michelle King

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growth of the chamber was slow at first, Jackson said, but the impact of the organization's efforts really started to show over the past few years. And, with events around the nation putting a renewed attention and emphasis on the fight for racial equality, the chamber has been busier than ever. Chamber membership recently surpassed 200, with 36 of those members joining after June 1.

And, as the impact of the chamber becomes more apparent, more businesses and people want to be involved. And that, WGU's Stetar said, is when change starts to happen. The work might be slow, but it is work worth doing.

"The more people we can get into key leadership positions, the more they can bring other people up," he said. "If we're going to be successful in making changes in our com-

munity, if we don't want to miss this chance for making lasting change, we all have to get involved and do the work."

For business owners like Steven Johnson, the impact of the Utah Black Chamber is already being felt in a big way. Black businesses can do more than just survive with the support and the connections the chamber provides.

"I've seen black businesses under the chamber not just survive but thrive and succeed," Johnson said. "They're still in play."

And the sky is the limit for the impact of the Black Success Center and everything that's coming next. Johnson would like to see a business associated with the Black Success Center become a Fortune 500 company. For Jackson, ultimate success will be when every business sector has a black-owned company among its ranks.

"We want to have our own ecosystem," Jackson said. "Whether you are looking for a therapist, a lawyer, an accountant, we want to make sure that we have every type of business here in Utah that's black-owned."

Both Jackson and Johnson are proud of what the chamber has already accomplished, too, but they are not shying away from the work left to do.

"We are trying to recover from 440 years of oppression and systemic racism and we want to educate people that we are going to be here for a long time," Jackson said. "We'll know we've reached ultimate success when we've changed Utah's diversity landscape and let people see the diversity that's coming."



Utah Black Chamber of Commerce president James Jackson III presents at the 2018 Chamber Luncheon at the KeyBank Tower in downtown Salt Lake City. Photo courtesy of Utah Black Chamber of Commerce.



Members of the Utah Diversity Career Fair Committee at the 2019 event, (L-R) James Jackson III, Margarita Angelo, Carolina Arias, Selma Mlikota, Bruce Hancey and Yvonne Tran. Photo courtesy of Utah Black Chamber of Commerce.



In 2020, the Utah Black Chamber secured more than

\$60,000

to build the Black Success Center

More than

200

individuals, small businesses, organizations and corporations have become members of the chamber and pledged to aid in the success of black Utahns

By 2045, more than

51%

of the U.S. population will be diverse and comprised of black, brown, and multiracial individuals

As of the 2012 census, more than

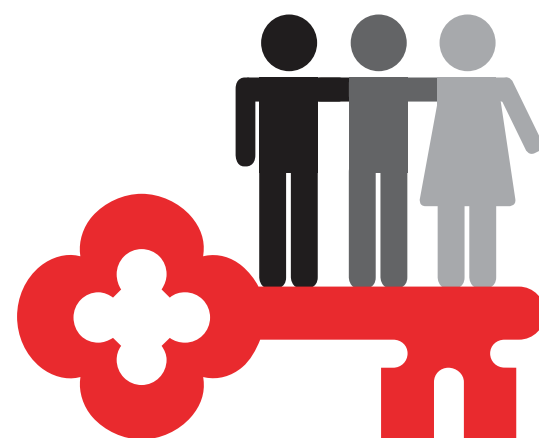
37,111

individuals make up Utah's black population



Employees of Goldman Sachs, a member of the Utah Black Chamber, attend the annual An Evening in Harlem fundraising gala. Membership dues and fundraising events like this one cover the costs of the services and resources the Utah Black Chamber offers. Photo courtesy of Utah Black Chamber of Commerce.

Thriving together.



Diversity and inclusion are reflected in our workforce, workplace, and marketplace. It's a commitment that's part of everything we do. We're proud of our record and of the recognition we've received, including awards earned year after year.

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Letting kids (even those with cancer) be kids

The hardest part about being a kid with cancer is that you don't get to be a kid at all. The goal of Camp Hobe is to provide a chance for pediatric cancer patients to just be kids and escape the fears and grown-up realities they face every day.

"These kids get to come to a place where the camp has been built by people who understand their experience," said Cory Wright, a member of the Camp Hobe board of directors. "Pediatric cancer is just a miserable, awful experience and you're forced to deal with a lot of these adult things and you kind of miss your childhood."

In operation since 1985, Camp Hobe is a summer camp hosted in Tooele open to children from the Intermountain West who are being treated or have been treated for cancer, as well as their siblings. Wright was first introduced to Camp Hobe when his son was diagnosed with pediatric cancer at the age of 11.

As a result of his treatment, Wright's son had a part of his leg removed. He was self-conscious and also worried that he wouldn't be able to enjoy his favorite activities and hobbies anymore. Camp Hobe showed him what was possible, Wright said.

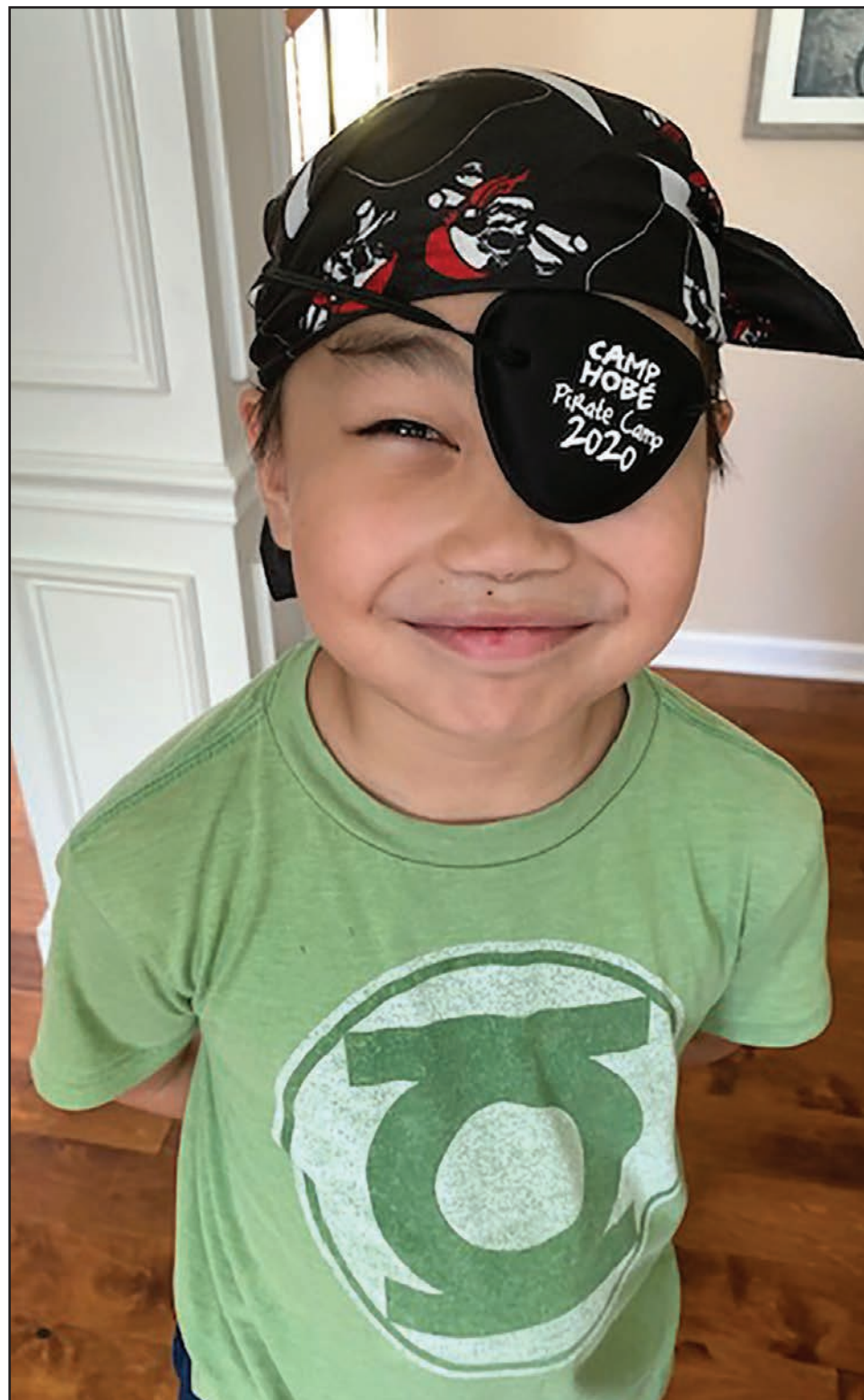
"Camp Hobe really brought him back to himself," Wright said of his son, who is now 21. "Camp Hobe is a place that really impacts these kids and helps them recover, more emotionally than anything."

Wright's son now returns to Camp Hobe every summer as a counselor, where he has the chance to show the campers that he can still bike, swim, rock climb and do everything else he wants.

The camp hosts 300 kids a summer on a budget between \$175,000 and \$205,000 a year, Wright said, all of which comes from donations including cash, in-kind donations and volunteer time.

"Our entire budget comes from the kindness of people," Wright said.

Intermountain Trailer, headquartered in West Valley City, hosts a golf tournament every year to raise money for Camp Hobe that usually brings in between \$3,000 and \$4,000 and participation is growing every year, said Travis Johnson, president and CEO



Camp Hobe includes all the usual camp activities, including crafting, campfires, swimming and camp songs, all in an environment where campers can forget about the fears and adult worries that fill so much of their lives. Photo courtesy of Camp Hobe.

of the semi-truck trailer dealer.

Giving back is a no-brainer for Intermountain Trailer and the vendors and customers who participate in the tournament every year.

"They recognize it's a good cause and they want to be a part of it," Johnson said. "Being part of a community is something much bigger than ourselves. It's the communities around us that support our business and the community around us that supports our employees and their families."

The tournament includes a silent auction and events at different holes. Participants also get to hear from campers and former campers throughout the day.

"We actually see less golfing and more just everyone enjoying the time together," Johnson said. "It's fun to see the smiles on the campers' faces and see them be able to relish in being able to do what normal people do."

The chance for kids with cancer to get to do what other kids do is exactly what drew Ali Thackeray to Camp Hobe. Her third daughter, Ruby, was born with a bumpy mass on the back of her neck that doctors thought was in the mole family. There was no cause for concern until Ruby turned 18 months and the mass started to balloon. A surgery to remove the mass was successful, Thackeray said, and yearly scans were uneventful until 2016 when Ruby was 3.

"And then we're in Room No. 8 and the oncologist could barely say the words," Thackeray said. "Her [Ruby's] lungs were just full of tumors."

Ruby was diagnosed with Stage 4 melanoma and doctors assumed it



PROGRAM STAFF

Christina Beckwith
Executive Director

Nicole Bailey
Program Director (Teen Week)

Emma Fisher
Counselor-In-Training Director

Jamie Seale, NP
Medical Director/Healthcare Administrator

Eric Willison
Program Director (Kids Week)

Julie Yeates
Kitchen Director



In-person or virtual, Camp Hobé provides a safe place—physically and emotionally—for pediatric cancer patients and survivors to have fun and connect with other people who understand their experience. “Having that be normal is really nice,” said Ali Thackeray, whose three daughters have attended Camp Hobé.



Here's what your donation will help provide:

- \$20**
family outing for 1 participant
- \$35**
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- \$750**
5-day summer camp session for 1 child



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christina Beckwith, PharmD

President, Executive Director

Wapiti Mama has almost 30 years of experience working with Camp Hobé and has been executive director since 2003, overseeing all our programs. She has also volunteered for the 2002 Summer Games and at camps for kids with asthma and muscular dystrophy.

Mary Ann Owens, MSW, MBA

Vice President

Mary Ann joined the Camp Hobé board in 2018. She has held clinical and operations leadership positions with healthcare management organizations, including Aetna, ActiveHealth Management, Human Affairs International and Magellan. Her community involvement includes Girl Scouts of Utah camps and as a long-time sponsor family for the Niños of Skis program.

Kathy Boben, RN

Board Chair

Kathy joined the board in 2009 and has been the board chairperson since 2016. She is registered nurse at Primary Children's Hospital in the Immunocompromised Care (ICS) Unit. She has also become a familiar face at Camp Hobé, volunteering her time there as part of the on-site medical staff, beginning in 1995.

Drey Bigney

Member-At-Large

Drey joined the Camp Hobé board in 2020. A former camper and cancer survivor, Drey now manages an engineering team focused on innovation in the higher education space. He is passionate about helping others navigate the challenges and uncertainty that arise from being diagnosed with cancer as a teenager.

Kellie Bower

Member-At-Large

Kellie is the office manager of a local custom software development firm in Salt Lake City. She attended Camp Hobé as a sibling camper in the early 1990s and joined the board in 2020.

Mark Christensen

Member-At-Large

Mark joined the board in 2019 and is currently the executive director of supply chain at Mity Lite Inc. in Orem. He has over 25 years of experience in supply chain with multiple international companies and is active in his profession as a volunteer leader.

Garrett Harding

Member-At-Large

Garrett joined our board in 2019. He is the community outreach manager of Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) at the University of Utah. In addition to his role at HCI, he serves on the executive committee of the Utah Cancer Action Network and as vice chair of the Utah Tobacco Free Alliance.

Robert Julian

Member-At-Large

Robert is the chief financial officer of Sportsman's Warehouse, an outdoor sporting goods retailer. He has over 30 years of financial management experience and joined Camp Hobé in 2020 and looks forward to serving our campers.

Allison Knudson

Treasurer

Allison joined our board in January 2017. She is the vice president branch manager at Capital Community Bank. In addition to volunteering at Camp Hobé, Allison has served on the board of Community Health Charities and is a president's ambassador for the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce.

Kameron Leon, LCSW

Member-At-Large

Kameron is an oncology social worker at Primary Children's Hospital. Kameron has a special interest in working with adolescents and young adults.

Austin Long

Member-At-Large

Austin is the CEO of RetouchUp, a photo editing company serving photographers and photo labs. He attended Camp Hobé as a sibling camper in 1994 and joined the board in 2018.

Neela Pack, JD

Member-At-Large

Neela joined the board of directors of Camp Hobé in 2020. She is a corporate attorney and counsels emerging growth companies.

Stephanie Pugsley, JD, CIPP/US

Member-At-Large

Stephanie joined the board of directors of Camp Hobé in 2020. She is senior in-house corporate counsel with a global contact center company where she negotiates large multinational agreements. She is also a certified data privacy lawyer.

Rebecca Smyrniotopoulos

Secretary

Rebecca joined the Camp Hobé board in 2018. She is a graduate of the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree in accounting and has worked in human resources her entire career, currently at the state of Utah legislative branch.

Belinda "Bel" Thayn, CCLS

Member-At-Large

Bel joined our board in 2020. She is the Certified Child Life Specialist at Castlevue Hospital in Price. She is involved with the Life Is Good Foundation as a LIG Playmaker, and The PeaceLove Foundation as a certified PeaceLove creator.

Cory Wright

Member-At-Large

Cory joined our board in 2019 as a parent representative. He is a mechanical engineer who is active in the commercial construction industry as technical sales engineer. All four of his children have been campers at Camp Hobé.



This year Camp Hobe went virtual, but campers could still enjoy many of the usual camp activities, including interacting with other campers and participating in camp activities with their siblings. Photo courtesy of Camp Hobe.



Camp Hobe includes all the usual camp activities, including crafting, campfires, swimming and camp songs, all in an environment where campers can forget about the fears and adult worries that fill so much of their lives. Photo courtesy of Camp Hobe.



In-person or virtual, Camp Hobe provides a safe place—physically and emotionally—for pediatric cancer patients and survivors to have fun and connect with other people who understand their experience. “Having that be normal is really nice,” said Ali Thackeray, whose three daughters have attended Camp Hobe.

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had started with the mass on the back of her neck. She started immunotherapy but her tumors grew. Meanwhile, Thackeray gave birth to her fourth baby in November and the baby went straight to the NICU.

“I prayed to God that my family could be together for Christmas that year and that Ruby would get the chance to be a big sister,” Thackeray said.

At the new year, Ruby’s tumors were stable and she restarted immunotherapy. But there was another twist in the story when Thackeray attended a melanoma summit at St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. The doctors there didn’t think Ruby had melanoma at all.

“I remember thinking, I don’t care what you call it, just tell me what to do,” Thackeray said.

A genetic test revealed a mutation in Ruby’s tumors that made her eligible for a trail drug — a small pill that Ruby takes every day. From December 2017 to February 2018, Ruby saw a 90 percent reduction in her tumors. Today, at 7 years old, she has no evidence of the disease.

In the summer of 2018, after Ruby’s successful treatment, Thackeray registered her two older daughters for the Kids Week portion of Camp Hobe, a sleepover camp for 11- and 12-year-olds. She registered Ruby for the day camp for 4- to 7-year-olds. (Camp Hobe also offers Camp Hobe Jr. for 6- to 11-year-olds and a Teen Week for 12- to 19-year-olds.)

“It was just like people had told me,” Thackeray said. “My kids didn’t want to leave. When you’re there, without parents, you just get to be who you want to be. Being creative, singing, it’s so pure and so simple and they loved it.”

Camp Hobe is also a place where everyone understands what you are going through. Whether you are missing part of your leg, like Wright’s son, or you have a port for receiving medication like Ruby, no one sticks out or has to explain themselves. And the camp provides as much a sense of belonging for the siblings of pediatric cancer patients as it does for the patients themselves.

“It’s unspoken, but all the kids can look at each other and say, ‘I know that you know what it’s like to have a sibling who gets all the attention or a sibling who might die,’” Thackeray said. “Having that be normal is really nice.”

Whatever a camper’s personal

circumstances, and whatever program they participate in, the goal of Camp Hobe is to have fun.

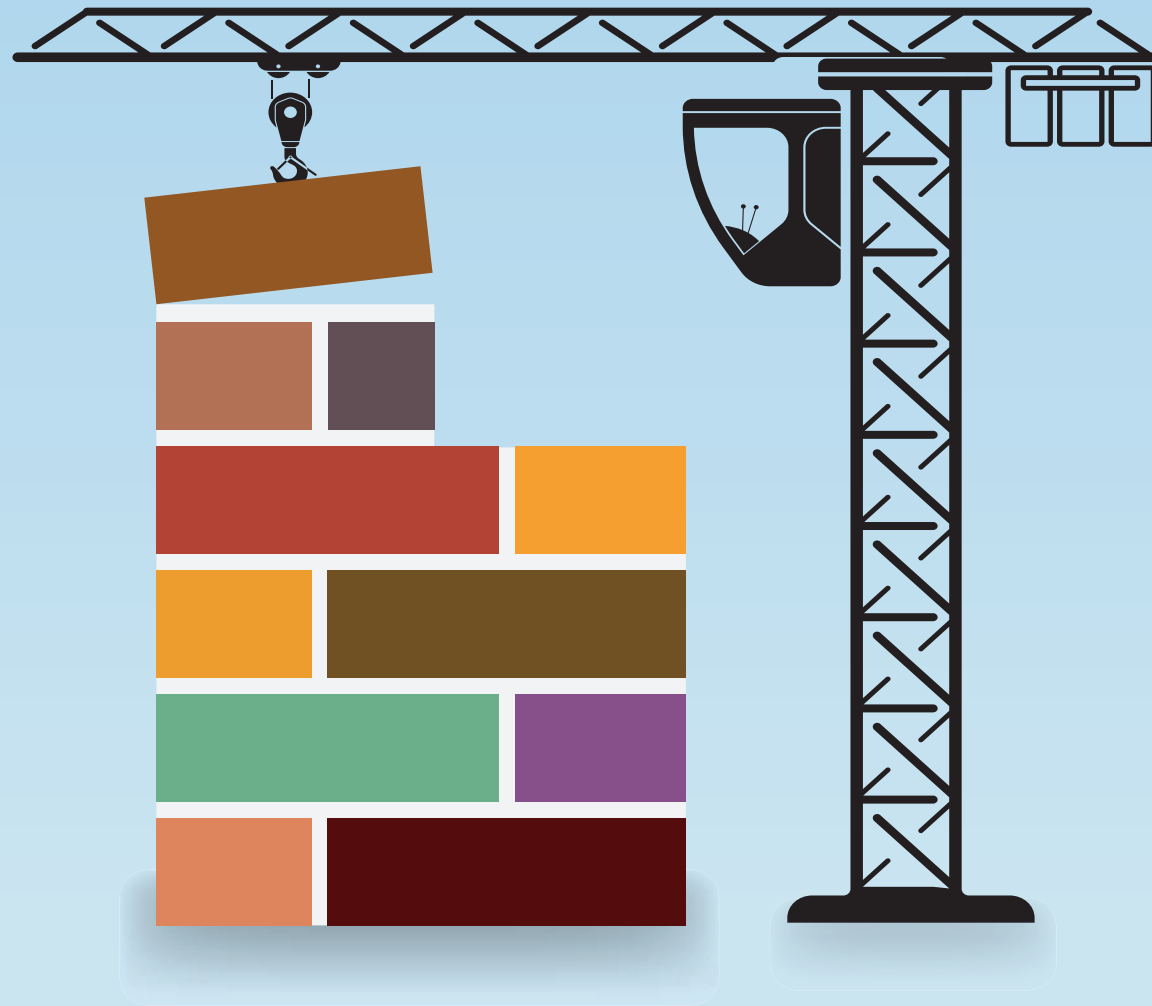
“If you went to Camp Hobe, the biggest thing you would see is just how happy and positive everyone is,” Wright said. “Everyone is working so hard to make every day the best day ever.”



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