

# A home away from home at Camp Treasure Chest

THE  LUNG ASSOCIATION™  
Nova Scotia



By: Caitlin Gray, Manager of Communications • July 2016

Sebastian Turner knows first-hand what it's like to live everyday as an anaphylactic. His sister Francesca has learned how to go about her day as an asthmatic. Both of them however have experienced the life-changing opportunity that **Camp Treasure Chest**, a week-long summer camp for children with respiratory conditions, has to offer kids like them.

Francesca, diagnosed with asthma at age five, describes having an asthma attack as “that feeling when you're breathing, but you don't breathe in as much as you can.”

“It's the thing that's holding you back from going full out because the amount of air you can breathe keeps shrinking,” she explains.

Sebastian on the other hand, has a complex type of asthma that may or may not present itself with symptoms. His allergy to exercise does have very specific symptoms but has caused him to be anaphylactic during his last episode.

He describes it as “basically being allergic to exercise,” however anaphylaxis is quite often unpredictable and may present itself in a number of situations or environments for unknown reasons.

Camp Treasure Chest takes place at Brigadoon Village located on Aylesford Lake in Nova Scotia.

The camp gives children living with asthma, anaphylaxis or respiratory conditions, the opportunity to experience summer camp in a safe environment and to connect with others who are facing the same health challenges. The “Asthma Education” session included as part of the daily routine ensures that campers are learning more about their illness and how to manage it. In addition, a doctor, nurse, two respiratory therapists, and counselors are present on site to maximize the safety of all camp attendees and make sure that they have the best time of their lives.

Most importantly, Camp Treasure Chest offers the invaluable chance for children to connect with others who are going through the same struggles as them. Children get to toast marshmallows around the camp fire, take part in fun activities like canoeing, cooking, and swimming and build life-long friendships.

In Halifax for an Anne of Green Gables audition at the beginning of June, Francesca speaks with a confident smile about what Camp Treasure Chest is all about – a confidence that her experience at Camp Treasure Chest has undoubtedly played a role in building.

“Every part of Camp Treasure Chest is amazing,” Francesca exclaims. “From the delicious breakfast every morning to the afternoon activities, it's impossible not to have fun.”

The poise she has at the tender age of 12 is endearing and reassuring. It's evident how much of an impact Camp Treasure Chest has had on her.

“What I love the most is how you can be a normal kid,” she continues. “Camp is practically a family away from home, where you're related by your lungs.”



Sebastian at Camp Treasure Chest in 2014



Francesca at Camp Treasure Chest in 2014

As for Sebastian, he has been impacted the most by his recent participation in the Leaders in Training program at Brigadoon Village. The program is designed to bring together older campers from all of the various camps that Brigadoon Village offers and to provide guidance and facilitate the development of leadership skills.

A sense of pride and accomplishment emanate from Sebastian's voice as he shares anecdotes from his experience.

"We would sit around in a circle and talk for hours," he says. "We had great discussions about anything that came to mind – we all really connected emotionally and everyone had a different story to tell."

He shares that this form of group therapy has definitely made him grow as a person and is an experience where he developed lifelong friendships.

His mother, Beverly, noticed the change in him as soon as she picked him up on the last day of camp.

"He was a whole new kid with a renewed compassion for others," she says. "It is so important for these kids to get together and talk, because they're the only ones that truly understand it."

"It brought out a new maturity and awareness in Sebastian that he didn't have before – it was phenomenal," says Beverly.

Parents Beverly and Ian, smile as their children recall their favourite moments from past summers at Camp Treasure Chest. Beverly chimes in once in a while, adding her perspective to the story, which is often met with a knowing laugh from Francesca and a friendly retort from Sebastian, showcasing the wonderful family bond that they have.

Camp Treasure Chest has also been a positive experience for Beverly and Ian.

"The hard part about anaphylaxis is how unpredictable it is," says Beverly.

Last summer, when Sebastian and Francesca went to Camp Treasure Chest, was the first chance for Beverly and Ian to go away on their own, without worry.

"At Brigadoon, the kids are taken care of and taken seriously, which gives us piece of mind," she says. "The staff are truly amazing."

Brigadoon Village puts on camps for more than just children living with asthma, they offer camps for a wide range of children including those suffering from bereavement to Crohn's disease.

Camp Treasure Chest combines the Lung Association of Nova Scotia's expertise on lung health and Brigadoon Village's experience in providing an amazing summer camp experience. The extraordinary camp is supported by the generous donors of the Lung Association of Nova Scotia who see a tremendous value in teaching kids about asthma. Thanks to dollars raised from these generous donors throughout the association's events and programs, we are able to help send several kids to camp each summer.

Both Sebastian and Francesca are returning for their third summer at Camp Treasure Chest this July.

"I'm excited for what this summer at camp will bring and to see all of my camp friends again," smiles Francesca.

Breathing easy is truly what it's all about – and it's not hard to do at a place as special as Camp Treasure Chest. •