

SPOTLIGHT: The Moyer Foundation's Camp Mariposa



Program

Children living with family members who struggle with a substance use disorder are often left out of the conversation about the impact of addiction. These children are at a greater risk to suffer from depression, anxiety, health and learning challenges and develop a substance use disorder of their own. **The Moyer Foundation's Camp Mariposa** program focuses on the needs of these children and their families. Camp Mariposa is a national addiction prevention and mentoring program specifically designed for youth who have been impacted by substance abuse in their families. The primary goals of Camp Mariposa are to delay onset of first use as long as possible and provide youth with coping skills that will lessen the likelihood of developing long-term issues such as anxiety, depression and health challenges.

How Camp Mariposa Works

Free weekend sessions of Camp Mariposa, held six times a year, are offered for children ages 9 to 12; participants and their families commit to attend multiple times throughout the year. At these sessions, campers engage in a combination of traditional, fun camp activities and education and support exercises led by mental health professionals and trained mentors. Camp Mariposa creates a support community, connecting campers to both other youth facing similar challenges and caring adult mentors. Additional educational, social and mentoring activities are offered for campers, program alumni, and their families throughout the year. Camp Mariposa New Hampshire, for example, recently held a Thanksgiving dinner and dessert party for camper and their families.

Camp Mariposa was developed and is supported by The Moyer Foundation, a non-profit organization with a mission is to provide comfort, hope and healing to children and families affected by grief and addiction. The Moyer Foundation partners with accredited mental health and youth serving organizations to deliver the Camp Mariposa program in communities across the nation.

Building the Camp Mariposa Network

Camp Mariposa was launched in 2007 in Seattle, Washington and expanded nationally in 2011 by opening locations in Indiana and Florida. Today, Camp Mariposa offers over 72 weekend camps at 12 locations around



the country— Los Angeles and San Diego, California; Washington, DC; Sarasota and St. Petersburg, Florida; South Bend, Indiana; Eastern Kentucky; New Orleans, Louisiana; Nashua, New Hampshire; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Everett/Seattle, Washington and southern West Virginia. Recently The Moyer Foundation received a \$2 million grant from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and a \$1.2 million grant from Indivior to sustain and grow this important initiative.

Eligibility Criteria

Weekend camp sessions are available to children ages 9 to 12 who have been impacted by a family member who struggles with a substance use disorder. The Moyer Foundation's community partners conduct outreach to schools, treatment facilities and youth-focused organizations to recruit program participants. In 2016, 84% of youth who attend Camp Mariposa qualify for free lunches; 88% have one or both parents who struggles with a substance use disorder; 33% are in foster care or kinship care and 20% are from military-affiliated families. Interested youth and families make a one year commitment to attend the program's activities. All participants complete an application and are interviewed

"I've met really great people here that truly understand what it's like to be in my situation. It makes me realize I am not alone."

– Camper, Age 9

Spotlight Series: highlighting innovative programs across the nation enacting a comprehensive strategy to address substance use disorders and addiction.



to ensure they will benefit from the program. The Moyer Foundation utilizes waitlists and works with community partners to identify additional resources for youth waitlisted until they get into the program.

Demonstrating Success

The Moyer Foundation has recently begun a multi-year study in partnership with Louisiana State University's Institute for Public Health and Justice on the impact of Camp Mariposa on participating youth. In addition, The Moyer Foundation continually seeks feedback about the impact and effectiveness of Camp Mariposa from the youth who attend the program. Some recent findings from surveys:

- **97%** of participants say they have **made friends** at Camp Mariposa
- **100%** of participants say there are **adults they trust** and listen to at camp
- **79%** of participants in a recent survey said that **mindfulness helps them feel better about themselves**

Stakeholders & Partners

The Moyer Foundation currently works with the following youth-focused or mental health organizations to offer Camp Mariposa in 12 communities across the United States:

- Boys and Girls Club of Greater Nashua (Nashua, NH)
- Buckhorn Children and Family Services (Buckhorn, KY)
- Community Connections (Princeton, WV)
- Compass Health (Everett/Seattle, WA)
- Jewish Family and Children's Services (Sarasota, FL)

"Camp Mariposa has been an amazing experience for me. Ever since my dad started drinking and got put in jail, things have been tough. I have had to suffer the pain and sadness of losing someone and losing trust. At Camp Mariposa, people help me to let go of worries and have fun. I get to meet many other kids who have had similar experiences and feelings. Camp also gives me a space to be free of my problems. This camp has really helped me!"

– Camper, Age 11

- National Center for Children and Families (Washington, DC)
- Oaklawn Psychiatric Center (South Bend, IN)
- Penn Foundation (Quakertown/Philadelphia, PA)
- San Diego Youth Services (San Diego, CA)
- SHIELDS for Families (Los Angeles, CA)
- WestCare GulfCoast Florida (St. Petersburg, FL)
- Youth Empowerment Project (New Orleans, LA)

In addition, The Moyer Foundation works with national organizations such as Addiction Policy Forum and National Association for Children of Alcoholics to address policy issues on a national level.

The Future of Camp Mariposa

The Moyer Foundation is expanding the Camp Mariposa network to serve more youth, with locations in West Virginia and metro Chicago expected to open this year.

To reach additional youth who have been impacted by the substance use disorder of a family member, the Moyer Foundation launched a Resource Center, a comprehensive online library of carefully curated resources with dedicated staff that provide the tools to support children and families affected by grief of addiction.

Resources & References

The Moyer Foundation, www.moyerfoundation.org/.