

Speech

Hello, my name is Anna Campbell. I am seventeen years old, am a grade twelve student at Lockview High school, have been accepted to both Acadia University and University of New Brunswick, and I have a cecostomy tube. I have had my c-tube since I was four years old however there are worse things in the world a person can go through (Precalculus eleven). I am actively involved in my school's Student Council and Youth Health Center programs. I love reading, writing, watching my favorite TV show Doctor Who, and am proud to say that I am a nerd. I am also proud to say that I have a cecostomy tube.

Before I went to the Easter Seals Camp Horizon, I wasn't as open or confident as I am now. I used to think that my ostomy was a gross, dark secret. If I told any of my friends, they would label me as an outsider. I was self-conscious about it, therefore hiding it for many years. The first time I told someone about my c-tube was at Camp.

My first time going to Camp was when I was twelve years old. I had just finished grade six. The idea of getting on a plane with four strangers to fly across the country without my parents was exciting for me, not so much for my mother (but that's another story). Upon my arrival at Camp Horizon, I immediately felt the welcoming atmosphere of the staff and campers. They all encouraged me to be myself. Camp is a safe environment with open and compassionate people who were all going through, or had gone through, similar experiences.

Camp is also exciting. We have gone on many excursions, such as driving to the badlands of Alberta to see prehistoric dinosaur bones in the Royal Tyrell Museum; heading into Calgary to become scientists at the Spark Science Center; and every year, we zip up our wetsuits to go rafting on the Kanaskis River with properly trained guides. There are many exciting things to do within Camp as well. The facility has an archery range, a pool, an art building, a rock climbing wall, a rope adventure course, and the giant swing. The giant swing is two 50ft tall poles with a cable wire connecting them. In the middle of the cable wire, another cable wire is looped around and stretches down to about 10 feet above the ground. When a person is strapped in ready to go, we pull on a rope, hoisting them as high up as they can tolerate, they disconnect the rope to their harness, and then swing like a pendulum. I go to the top every time and hold the record for 'Best scream'.

This past summer has been the best year at Camp. I was in a group with nine other girls around my age. Our councillors went above and beyond to make our camp experience the best it could be. We had a tea party (where they made all of the food and other little gifts), many chances to express ourselves in an accepting environment, they made corsages for our dance, and we had a Disney movie marathon and sing-a-long. Our neighbors probably weren't happy after the last one. This past year, I made more friends. They support me, I

support them. We had multiple discussions about a wide variety of topics both serious and not-so-serious. We became more like a family. I am still in contact with most of them via Facebook. They have helped me grow as a person and as a Disney nerd. I plan on keeping in contact with them for a long time.

Words cannot describe what giving me the opportunity to go to camp means, and I don't think I could truly express my gratitude in a single speech. The best way for me to summarize my gratitude is two words: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

I would like to specifically thank Mr. Woolridge. He organizes the flight arrangements, makes sure all of the camp applications are present and completed, and gets up at 5AM every year to make sure the six of us going to camp make it on the plane with a smile and energy. Whether the energy is from coffee or not, I am sworn to secrecy.

There's one person who has been with me and helped when there was trouble. She is the ET Nurse extraordinaire, the one and only Gail Creelman. I first met Gail when I was three and a half years old, fresh out of Jacksonville Mississippi. She has watched me grow up, and has every school picture I have, except for one. My graduation picture. I find it funny that she decides to retire when she can finally get rid of me with my transfer to the adult hospital... Must have worn her out. Now that I think about it, I haven't even entered the adult hospital and their ET nurse is retiring as well... Gail must have warned her I was coming and she decided to run for hills. I don't blame her.

Gail Creelman was the one who put my name forth to go to Camp. She has done so much for all of the kids with whom she oversees, making sure they are happy and healthy, caring about each and every one of them as if they were her own.

I would like to wish Gail Creelman a happy retirement, and hope that your golden years shine as bright as you do. I could ask a favor of you all here today, will you please stand up and give a big round of applause to Gail Creelman.

Webmaster note : The above speech was given by Anna Campbell at the Ostomy Halifax monthly meeting on December 6, 2015 and has been reproduced with permission.