



CAMP SPOTLIGHT – ALEXA’S FULL-CIRCLE JOURNEY AT CAMP FIREFLY

At just 12 years old, Alexa’s life changed dramatically. In October 2005, she began experiencing severe back pain while playing soccer. At first, her family thought she had pulled a muscle, but when her legs started going numb, they knew something was seriously wrong. On January 20, a visit to the emergency room and a CAT scan revealed a tumor pressing against her spinal cord. Doctors later told her that if they had waited any longer, the cancer likely would have spread to her lungs. Alexa was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma.

What followed was more than a year of grueling treatment—14 rounds of chemotherapy and radiation therapy that left her physically and emotionally exhausted. Although the tumor disappeared after the first round of treatment, the side effects were overwhelming. Alexa spent much of that year bedridden and battling constant nausea. “It was hard, mentally,” Alexa recalls. “I think I was angry and sad, but I got through it.”

Everything changed when she was finally well enough to attend Camp Firefly in Las Vegas. Surrounded by kids who understood exactly what she had been through, Alexa found healing, connection, and hope. The experience had such a profound impact on her life that she returned to camp as a counselor and even recruited her friends—and eventually her husband—to become part of the camp community because she believed so deeply in its mission.

Today, Alexa is 18 years cancer-free, married, and the mother of two beautiful daughters. Inspired by her own pediatric cancer journey, she earned a master’s degree in clinical health counseling and general mental health and now serves as a therapist for Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation, supporting young adults and siblings navigating their own cancer experiences.

Her journey at Camp Firefly has come full circle. From camper to counselor to leader, Alexa also serves as the camp’s Behavioral Specialist, known as the “Spirit Captain.” In this role, she helps support the emotional well-being and safety of campers and staff, promotes positive behavior strategies, and creates an environment where children and families can experience adventure, belonging, and lifelong memories.

Alexa’s story is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of camp, community, and compassion—and of how one survivor’s journey can inspire hope for countless others.

