ChIPS 2012
WRAPPER

CHRONIC
ILLNESS
PEER
SUPPORT

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Liz Dixon Award

Liz Dixon was an inspiring participant of the ChIPS Program. Liz's courage, positive attitude to life, joyous spirit and commitment to those she cared about will be forever remembered by the ChIPS community. To keep her memory and love of the ChIPS Wrapper and arts alive, we created The Liz Dixon Wrapper Award for Creative Arts. This is awarded to the ChIPS member with the best creative submission into the magazine.

Previous winners:

2010/2011 Winner – Jessica Marshall
2009 Winner – Geri Herd
2008 Winner – Scott Campbell
2007 Winner – Karen Lay
2006 Winner – Louise Pellegrino
2005 Winner – Elisha Mont

ChIPS isn't just about chronic illness.
It's about being an adolescent and getting on with life.

ChIPS aims:

- To continue to provide ChIPS members with opportunities to interact with peers who have a similar understanding about life with a chronic illness.
- To provide ChIPS members with the opportunity to develop and utilise skills, such as leadership and peer support, and raise self confidence through opportunities provided within the program
- To provide ChIPS members with the skills and confidence to increase their ability to deal with life with a chronic illness
- To provide ChIPS members with the opportunity to actively raise awareness in our community, not just about ChIPS but about living with a chronic illness

The Royal
Children's
Hospital
Melbourne

Contact ChIPS at:
The Royal Children's Hospital
50 Flemington Road
Parkville, Victoria 3052
Ph: (03) 9345 6616
www.rch.org.au/chips

Chris Balnaves Award

Chris Balnaves (Bellsy) was an amazing ChIPS member. He joined ChIPS in 1997, and shortly after it proved impossible to find anybody who didn't know him, or at least know of him! Chris was once said to be the heart of the ChIPS community, attending all the social events and reference committee meetings he could, whilst always making the effort to introduce himself to new people and befriend as many Chippers as possible.

One of the highlights for Chris was the annual ChIPS camp, which he took delight in organizing and participating in. Chris won the first ever Walsh Perpetual Trophy and proved to be a very competitive team leader, trying his hardest at every camp to win it back. Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to Chris as he passed away in 2003.

The Chris Balnaves award for Most Outstanding Camper was created to honour and remember Chris for who he was, and his dedicated contribution to ChIPS and the spirit of the program. Chris was an amazing and inspiring person who will always be rememberd and truly missed.

2012 Winner – Jemma Young

Previous winners:

2011 Winner – James Williams
2010 Winner – Jordan Hammond
2009 Winner – Scott Campbell
2008 Winner – Stacy Cumming
2007 Winner _Louise Pellegrino
2006 Winner _Bree Regester
2005 Winner Andrew Selvaggi

ChIPS Wrapper

2012

The Royal
Children's
Hospital
Melbourne

Editorial 2012

Welcome ChiPPERS, staff and readers alike to the 2012 Wrapper. We have delivered another Wrapper for everyone to hopefully enjoy as much as we've loved putting our time and efforts into delivering another (arguably!) high quality Wrapper.

2012 was a hell of a year. Whilst my past tenures in Publications were quite straightforward, it was only when Eliza and I took over the leadership that we realized how much work had to go through, mainly harassing people for articles. 2012 was definitely our toughest year and we hope the Wrapper is indicative of how much effort we put into organising, editing and delivering another top notch Wrapper worthy of you to read.

The Wrapper, and Publications in general, could not have been as effective or even survive without the leadership of Eliza Masterson. Eliza's contributions to Publications and ChIPS have been astounding, and her leadership and ability to chase people for articles was absolutely essential towards making the Wrapper happen. Thank you so much Eliza, even though we had some stressful times that stretched our friendship, I would do it all over again. If you should thank one person for the Wrapper, please thank Eliza for it, as this, or anything in the entire year that relates to 'pubs' would not have happened without her.

The Publications committee have also been graced with the tireless efforts of Caiti Martin and Sian Erfurth, two integral members whose contributions have been nothing but beneficial and effective towards making the Publications team work. Thank you to both for coming to meetings and contributing to the Wrapper.

To everyone on Reference Committee, we thank you for co-operating with us, even as we hounded and harassed for articles. The Wrapper is made up mostly of articles written by the ChIPS community, which what makes it so special. So thank you for the high quality of writing and cooperation with Publications.

And of course, finally, we thank you. The reader. Just by opening the Wrapper means you are part of ChIPS and for that we thank you for being with us. For joining us on our journeys, our highs and lows, our inevitable successes and failures for everything ChiPS stands for, we thank you.

This is Kevin, signing off for the last time.

Jarnia's Journal

Well 2012 – what a year it has been! BUSY and AWESOME would be words to sum it up!

The year kicked off with January Camp, held once again at Cave Hill Creek. 42 ChIPERS and a whole bunch of medical staff and volunteers attended and contributed to a rocking good time. The weather came to the party and helped to create some fantastic memories for everyone. Massive congrat's to the Camp Committee who took the reins and pulled off a great camp. Thanks to the camp volunteers and medical staff who attended. It was great to have such a capable and passionate group of people to share the ChIPS Camp experience with.

Next up was the appointing of the Reference Committee for 2012. What a fantastic job this group has done this year organising the socials, January camp (as mentioned above), producing the Wrapper you are reading along with some great promotion of ChIPS. Well done and a huge THANK YOU to everyone on 'Ref Com'. Your dedication and efforts are very much appreciated by the ChIPS staff and ChIPERS!

I can't talk about Reference Committee without acknowledging the outstanding efforts of our ChIPS mentors – where would we be without you guys? Your wisdom, insight and constant encouragement is highly valued. THANK YOU for the contribution you have made.

2012 has been full on with four great socials, discussion groups, January Camp, High Challenge Camp, Leadership Training and Peer Leader training. Along with all this we also launched the ChIPS Art Group, which is run by Michelle Dixon here at RCH fortnightly on a Tuesday. Welcome to the team Michelle! Even if you are not into art I would encourage you to get involved – half the fun is just hanging out with other ChIPERS. Get in touch for more info!

A special thanks to Jane and Patty who organised a tremendous High Challenge Camp for ChIPS this year (and ordered good weather as well!), it is awesome to have the support of the Victoria Police High Challenge Program and your passion and support of the program more broadly is just
amazing! THANK YOU.

2012 has also seen us settle into our new home at the new Royal Children's Hospital. I think we have made a fairly seamless transition from Number 8 Gatehouse Street to Level 2, West Building. If you are in the hospital feel free to seek out my desk in the Centre for Adolescent Health – I am always up for a chat.

Massive THANKS to our philanthropic supporters and to the Department of Health and the Office for Youth for their financial grants which help run the program.

And finally to the ChIPERS – you are what makes CHIPS the awesome program it is – continue to stay involved and support each other – that is what ChIPS is all about.

Stay tuned for 2013 – it will be another goodie.

Jarnia Cameron, ChIPS Team Leader

Meagan's Musings

From my small part of the ChIPS office here I can see the floating leaves and angels suspended above Main Street and the tail of 'The Creature' while listening to the sounds of many colleagues busy at work and tapping away on keyboards or making important phone calls. This is a very different, and much grander, view than my corner of the office in number 8 Gatehouse St. How things have changed! December 2012 marks 1 year since moving into the new Royal Children's Hospital building and thus ChIPS moving as well.

As 2012 comes to a close I reflect on yet another full, vibrant and eventful year at here at ChIPS. I continued in my role as the Group Facilitator two days a week and have worked hard on getting new ChIPPERS on board and into the ChIPS community. Additionally I have been focusing on promoting ChIPS more around the hospital and with external organisations as well as developing the Peer Leader role and training.

We successfully ran two eight week groups and two full Intensives this year initiating an enthusiastic group of new ChIPPERS . The biggest challenge with Eight week group this year was where to hold it now that we are in the new RCH. That challenge was overcome by working with the Kelpie (adolescent) ward and the Starlight room. This allowed us the use the Adolescent Rec Room and also the Starlight room which were very useful spaces for us to run the Eight week group. I could not have run the Eight week group without the dedicated and talented Peer Leaders Beth Sleeman and Jemma Young. Thank you to you both and to James Williams and Kevin He who came along to talk about what other fabulous things ChIPS has to offer after Eight week group.

The two day Intensive program continues to be a very popular choice and well attended for rural members to attend. This program introduced 16 new ChIPERS to ChIPS allowing more isolated rural young people to become connected and meet others with similar challenges. The Peer Leaders had a major role in making these two Intensives successful. Thank you to Grant Monks, James Williams, Beth Sleeman, Tamara Myers, Holly Duffy, Jemma Young and Sarah Menta. Also thanks to members of the Reference Committee that attended to share what comes next in ChIPS.

Thanks also to all of the co-facilitators of Eight Week group and the Intensives including Jano, Paddy, Jarnia, Michelle and Briony.

The ChIPS Peer Leaders make a huge contribution to the program and I thank them for their dedication, leadership, maturity, initiative and ideas. The Peer Leader team includes: Grant, Tyrone, James, Beth, Alycia, Holly, Jemma, Eliza, Rohan, Kevin, Sarah, Scott and Tamara.

I look forward to working with you all in 2013 while welcoming a new crew of young people to the ChIPS community.

Meagan Hunt, ChIPS Programme Facilitator

Chairperson's Report

After completing my 8 Week Group I was quickly introduced and made part of the ChIPS Reference Committee. From day one of being a part of this committee and attending these meetings I always hoped that I would one day be Chairperson and help run these meetings and 'Ref Com'. This year I was bestowed the amazing privilege of being the Chairperson. Being the Chairperson also allowed me to speak out more and helped alleviate my fear of public speaking.

The Reference Committee of 2012 were a great bunch of people and I was extremely happy and proud of all we achieved this year. We were able to all come together once a month and break into our committees and get work done all whilst having a few laughs along the way.
Thank you to the sub committees: Publications, Camp, Socials and Advocacy for doing some amazing work. 2012 has never been a bigger year for ChIPS. With a few more years and dedicated people like you on Ref Com ChIPS will see huge growth and improvements tenfold. I would like to say a big thankyou and a very big well done to the 2012 ChIPS Reference Committee. I hope to see all your faces (plus hopefully a few more!) next year.

Sarah Menta (aka Smenta)
Chairperson 2012

Sub Committee's 2012

Camp Committee

Well guys it's the end of the year which means that camp is very very close (or when you're reading this, happening right now!)

We've been extremely busy, doing last minute stuff, and I'm pretty exhausted, but it has been so worth it. I have absolutely loved working as Camp Leader with my fantastic team: Beth, Sarah, Tamara and Zak, I thank you. And of course our wonderful mentor Jess.

T-shirts are all designed to order, the theme has been completely hashed out and I hope everyone has some amazing costumes for the second night on camp!
It has been a pleasure planning and running camp for all the ChIPPERS.

Happy 2013 camp!
Love Jemma

Sub Committee's 2012

Socials Committee

The 2012 Social Committee Tash, Uli, Bec, James, Jane as our mentor and myself, Rohan as the leader.
This year has proved to be extremely successful, with our first social being the high ropes course with a large number of Chippers attending. A fun time was greatly enjoyed by everyone.

The second social, Circus Skills drew one of the largest attendances to a social, and was again a huge success. The third social was called Chiplympics attended once again by a large number of very enthusiastic Chippers who had a great fun time.

We could not have achieved the success of these events without the teamwork, time and effort contributed by each member of our team.

Rohan Knowles

Advocacy Committee

Hey ChiPPERS!

It's Danni from Advocacy Committee here. It's been a great year for us, and I'm here to fill you in on the details.
We've had some very successful ward visits resulting in some awesome new ChIPPERS joining us in 2012. It was also great to see these guys at the High Challenge camp!
In October, James and I started RCH TV careers , appearing on the show 'Macadamia' to promote ChIPS to other young people in the hospital. This was a fantastic opportunity for ChIPS to get the word out there and reach potential future ChIPPERS.

Alycia, James, Uli, Zak and Grant have been busy giving presentations, educating staff and peers alike about ChIPS. We also have a few other projects underway including a revamp of the brochure and a welcome gift pack for new ChIPPERS next year.

I'd like to extend a huge thanks to the team; Tyrone, Alycia, Grant and our mentor Allesha. It's been a busy but very fun year, and I can't wait to see what's in store for ChIPS next year!

Danni

What is the Wrapper?

Once upon a time, long before ChIPS and Melbourne I wanted to work for the Age or Herald Sun, or maybe create my own magazine. I took journalism as a Year Nine elective and tried to take as many different English classes as my **lit**tle dingy Ballarat School offered. So when I picked up the 2006 Wrapper in between teen health pamphlets at the adolescent health unit I insanity fell in love with ChIPS and the Wrapper. I read the amazing articles and all about Liz Dixon and before I even knew how to join the program I wanted to help make this amazing magazine that showed me so much about this amazing program.

Fast forward a few years and I'm reading five past wrappers , looking at what we need for this years wrapper and what we used to have in past wrappers. It's pretty exciting knowing that I helped make two of them with one more on the way. I remember being that sceptical 15 year old who didn't think she needed to join some silly group and then being blown away by one leader and a small magazine.

Now I know how much work and joy it is to create it. We basically start thinking about the Wrapper at the start of the year, or we have it at the back of our minds while getting the first ChILL (newsletter) rolling. Asking for articles starts at the first social and every time my email says I have a new message, a new article I squeal a little bit. Maybe that's a little sad but all your articles make the Wrapper happen as much as the 'pubs' team does. Sometimes it's a lot of waiting and sometimes we get more work done though emails and just go crazy at Reference Committee because we have no work to do at the time. Lots of articles and ideas are thrown around the table at 'Ref' and the ChILL is thoughtfully put together like a tiny little newspaper but with more of the good stuff.

Then it is September and it's time to get cracking into the Wrapper and collecting articles that couldn't be written until now. With every article and photo for the front page that is submitted the closer we get to getting the Wrapper done by our desired due date. Sometimes we go little crazy getting articles. And In a fit of not being able to decide what front page photo to vote for I think a collage is the best idea in the world! But then I sleep and see the errors of my ways. We eventually get articles and remember how hard it is to write one while writing our own. Then it is time for Kevin to become editor and basically make the magazine while I get the photo pages in order for the finished product.

The most exciting part is of course getting the final product from the publishers and being able to give it to all of you. Deciding who will be awarded the Liz Dixon award at camp and knowing that what we make will hopefully inspire someone else to join and keep others connected with ChIPS makes all the crazy times that comes with it worth it.

Thank you for reading and understanding a bit more how Publications works!

Eliza Masterston, Publications Leader

Mentor Thanks

Publications—Giles Craig

This year on Publications we have again been graced with the presence of Giles, who has been consistently brilliant and reliable as publications mentor. Giles has contributed so much to publications since he joined and it's always an absolute delight to have him around, with his light hearted attitude and useful advice that has always been invaluable month after month of meetings.
We always welcome Giles to Chips and he shall always be welcome here as he grows older and wiser and hopefully with a long white beard to go with it, no matter what committee he ends up in (though we definitely acknowledge his strengths lie in publications). Publications would like to give their best wishes to Giles and his family for the future, and hopefully we shall continue to see Giles contributing to Chips, as he is always welcome here.

Eliza Masterson

Socials—Jane Franklin

Socials committee would like to thank Jane for her absolutely fantastic work behind the scenes this year. Her great energy, and input to all of the events has been exceptional and certainly helped make the socials what they have been, a great success!

James Williams

Advocacy—Allesha Fecondo

Allesha has been a wonderful member! The Advocacy team would like to thank her for all her hard work and the help she has given us this year.
Allesha has always given us the push we needed to get things done this year, and she has always been enthusiastic and supportive with everything that we have done. Allesha was the mastermind behind the idea to record a segment for the RCH TV Show 'Macadamia', which is something we had not thought of before and would not have done without the help of Allesha.
We are so grateful to have had you as our mentor this year, thank you Allesha!

From the Advocacy Committee

Camp—Jessica O'Dowd

We all know you have had a trying year to say the least. Considering this, the time you have given to ChIPS & especially the Camp Committee of 2012 is really impressive & we are so grateful for your time & effort. Your own experiences of ChIPS & life, your pearls of wisdom & advice, are greatly sought after by us! Each time I hear your name mentioned or the name Jess O'Dowd crops up in a conversation the face of the ChIPPER & or the staff member in question lights up! Everyone always loves seeing you at ChIPS events & you are always asked after, in regards to camp!

So, thank you from ChIPS & a very special thank you from the Camp Committee who knows that the January 2013 Camp would not have occurred without you! We the Camp Committee are also extremely lucky to have had you as our supporter, role model & mentor. You are an inspiration to us all! We are very lucky to have you as a strong part of our ChIPS Family!

Written by Zak on behalf of Jemma, Sarah, Tamara & Beth

Reference Committee 2012

Name: Jemma Young
Committee: Camp
LEADER

Name: Caiti Martin
Committee: Publications

Name: Eliza Masterson
Committee: Publications
LEADER

Name: Sian Erfurth
Committee: Publications

Name: Tasha Payne
Committee: Socials

Name: Sarah Menta
Committee: Camp

Name: Rohan Knowles
Committee: Socials
LEADER

Name: Zak Hanyn
Committee: Camp

Name: Bec Tipping
Committee: Socials

Name: Tamara Myors
Committee: Camp

Name: Beth Sleeman
Committee: Camp

Name: Grant Monks
Committee: Advocacy

Reference Committee 2012

Name: Kevin He
Committee: Publications

Name: Danni Faour
Committee: Advocacy
LEADER

Name: Tyrone Kelly
Committee: Advocacy

Name: Uli Kaplan
Committee: Socials

Name: Alycia Mack
Committee: Advocacy

Name:James Williams
Committee: Socials

New ChIPPERS

WELCOME TO THE NEW CHIPPERS....

This year we welcomed many new ChIPPERS who completed the 8-Week Group or the Intensive peer support groups throughout the year. Each group is very unique and each person brings different qualities to the dynamic and experience of the group as a whole. In every group, experiences have been shared, connections have been made and laughs have been had. It has been pleasure to have worked with you all.

Meagan Hunt
ChIPS, Group Facilitator

So, welcome to:

Eight Week Group	Intensive
Addison Barbera	Laura Gysslink
Coen Ashton	Zoe Parry
Emily Ryan	Courtney Wilkenson
Rachel Nixon	Claudia Shoberger
Ben Calandra	Shaelee Preston
Kyle Taylor	Richard Cusick
India Murphy	Kate McKenna
Brooke Dance	Rylee Havard
Eleanor Sweeney	Laura Cartledge
Rachel Thomas	Emily Robson
	James Mckay
	Maddy Kendell

ChIPS Art Therapy Group

As part of another addition to ChIPS, the Art Therapy program combines ones artistic talents with a relaxed friendly environment, to give fellow ChIPPERS the chance to express their feelings and unwind with friends. Run by Art Therapist Michelle Dixon who, with her amazing skills and wide range of knowledge, selects a different theme for each session tailored to assist ChIPPERS in sharing their experiences of chronic illness. Situated in the adolescent recn room, Michelle prepares a wide variety of artistic materials for ChiPPERS to use at their disposal, creating what she describes as an 'open studio' for participants to work in.

So far Michelle has far surpassed expectations in bringing to light the idea of artistic expression, creating an atmosphere that is warm and welcoming as she works with ChiPPERS to help them understand and explore the world of art. Encouraged to develop your own ideas and artwork Art Therapy brings out the best in every Chipper, and is awaiting others who have an interest in art, or are looking for a fun way to spend an afternoon or evening. Session times in 2012 were fortnightly on Tuesdays from 4:30pm – 6:30pm and Saturdays from 1:30pm – 5:00pm (with free food!)

For more information please contact Michelle at michelle.dixon@rch.org.au

Rachel Nixon

Socials 2012

Social 1: High Ropes

On the 3rd of April ChIPS had its first social of 2012. So we all woke up at the crack of dawn to travel to Leaps and Bounds for a day of high ropes. After a long bus ride trying to do the papers quiz we all got off the bus and sat in a shed to learn about the day ahead. After a getting to know each other exercise we all put our harnesses and safety hats and set out to the ropes course.

We were split up into two groups as there where two different rope courses, the possum climb and the high ropes. My team went on the high ropes first. I went first with Bec as there where two ladders on either side of the rope where two people could walk towards each other and meet in the middle. Unfortunately I didn't have enough energy to climb to the top of the ladder and get on the rope but I was amazed how everyone had a go and cheered for everyone no matter how far they went.

After a barbecue lunch it was time for the two groups to switch courses, now we were on the possum climb. Basically you get harnessed up to a rope and your team pulls you up as high as you want to go. The staff also fashioned a wheelchair harness onto the possum climb so people could just sit in the chair and swing at the top. It looked pretty terrifying but everyone who tried it seemed to like it after screaming their heads off. Again everyone had a go at the possum climb and it was pretty awesome getting lifted into the air and being at the same level as people on the high ropes.

After we finished up on the ropes courses we headed back to the shed for a talk and to get some prizes. I got some lovely Easter eggs to eat on the way home so that was the icing on an amazing first social of the year.

Eliza

Social 2: Circus Skills

Wakey wakey, eggs and bakey! Well, I didn't get eggs and bakey, but I was excited and ready to go all the same. It was the 3rd of July, 2012 and some of us Chippers were ready to brave the cold and headed down to the sports stadium in Brunswick to learn how to do a few circus skills. After a quick demonstration, it was our turn to have a go at juggling balls and coloured scarves, twirling plates and hula hooping, and other spectacular tricks they do at the circus.

Even though I had a dead arm from the dreaded flu vac I had the day before, and my body was hating on me that day, which bodies tend to do when you have a chronic illness, it didn't matter because I was with my ChIPPERS. Learning how to juggle was fun, and pretty frustrating. I kept dropping the balls, but in the end I managed to juggle once so I was pretty happy with that.

And learning that I could hula hoop was exciting! I didn't think I would be able to do it, since I can't move my pelvis and hips very well due to a metal rod in my spine, but the instructor showed me a way to do it using my legs, and I did it! So I was really proud of myself. After we had finished, we had pizza for lunch and a nice catch up with our friends, and then we all parted ways until next time. I always enjoy my time with the ChIPPERS, they always make me feel like I belong somewhere, something I've never had before. You guys are my special place. All my love, always.

Love Jess Curgenven

Socials 2012

Social 3: ChIPlympics

Wow, what a day! Friends, fun, soccer, cricket, pizza, charades and tonnes of laughs! What more could any chipper possibly want?
The day was held at the Brunswick sports stadium, where a great bunch of ChIPPERS laughed the day away, the day started with us all being split up into teams and coming up with a team chant, not without playing some famous name games first of course!

After every team showed off their fancy chants, we then got into some pretty competitive games of soccer, after soccer we sat down for some pizza and long chats, as always with chippers, there were tonnes to catch up on! After lunch, our four teams became two and we got into a great game of cricket, everyone had loads of fun, after all that running around, we had some hilarious games of charades, always good fun! Trying to guess things like the films Titanic or Monsters Inc is always going to bring on a tonne of laughs.

That brought us to the end of a great day, and to the end of another amazing social. Thankyou to the socials committee that made the day possible, everyone had a blast!

Kriss Waller

Christmas Party

ChIPS says goodbye to yet another fantastic year, giving hope and support to those with lives burdened by chronic illness. Assembling at QV Strike Bowling Bar faces new and old came together to celebrate the coming holidays with a good round of bowling and a night of karaoke. Many got into the true spirit of Christmas, and as they showed off their costumes, the teams were selected and Kris Kringle gifts organised (for the arrival of someone very special.)

Surrounded by an array of dazzling lights and catchy pop tunes the games began, spiking friendly rivalries and a selection of powerful bowling skills. With a few surprising strikes the evening hit off to a great start as old friends reunited for ChIPS final social of the year. Dining in our own room with a selection of delicious pizza’s the Christmas spirit truly came alive, with the one and only Jolly Saint Nick making a personal trip to hand out gifts. After such a surprise the night ended with a few karaoke hits including ‘Set Fire to the Rain’ ‘Call Me Maybe’ and some classic songs from ‘Grease.’

A night that makes any ChIPPER glad to have such a supportive network of people they can call their family, we all anticipate with joy the coming year and what it will bring for us. Putting a special thank you forward to all those involved this year, with ChIPPER James Williams citing that this has been the best year as regards to turnouts for ChIPS socials. Overall a great night that welcomed some new faces to the ChIPS family and has left everyone pumped and ready for what awaits us in 2013.

Rachel Nixon

High Challenge Camp 2012

The 3rd of October seems so far away now but the week leading up to it was a whirlwind of looking for something fluoro, remembering everything from peer leadership training, getting all my meds filled and packing for every kind of weather. But the long week was soon over and I was soon getting my brand new suitcase out of the car ready for my first high challenge camp. After signing in with the medical team, loading luggage and waiting around a bit we where off. After falling asleep for a minute the first stop was at Ballan for lunch at McDonalds (YAY). Second stop the beautiful and familiar site of Cave Hill Creek.

After arriving at Cave Hill Creek and unloading the bus it was time to meet the High Challenge crew and jump straight into some activities. First we played human bingo, I can't remember any of the questions specifically, but I remember that they were very interesting therefore I learnt some things I may never of known, or thought to ask some ChIPPERS. I was a bit run down that day so I don't remember which activities happened or if I'm right about the order for the next activities, but we all got into a group according to our cabins and got to know each other and come up with some room rules for the next three days.

The other activity of the afternoon was a four part activity. First we had to decorate a special High Challenge hat so everyone had their own personalized hat for the rest of camp. Then we had to decorate a custom High Challenge drink bottle to keep, which was awesome as I then had two drink bottles and plenty of water then. The hardest activity was definitely the activity where we got a paper bag and wrote our first name diagonally down the bag, then come up with a positive word that described yourselves that began with each letter of our name. That was so hard as I was fresh out of describing words starting with Z, but I made it with the help of other campers. It was amazing to see everyone helping each other out when they couldn't think of a positive word to put down about themselves. It was also amazing to see the last activity finished that was a "goals wall" of sorts. Where everyone had to anonymously write one goal for camp and put it in a brick wall formation on the window. It was so cool, I'm pretty sure I just stood in front of it for five minutes in awe, but it was really cool. I hope everyone achieved what they wanted over the three days.

After dinner we got to decorate our warm fuzzies with magazines, stickers, all sorts of paper and paper shapes. I didn't even look at anything else before I started covering my book with all the stickers I could find because I fail at doing anything with art that requires thinking about what it will look like when it's finished. But I think mine and everyone else's books looked awesome in the end. Every book was unique and special with everyone's own touch and it was a good way to wind down after a long day of decorating.

The second day, as always, was the biggest day of camp so it was early to rise once again ready for action. After breakfast we got ready for the day and then got into pairs and set off around the camp site in search for things starting with every letter of the alphabet, surprisingly some pairs did find something for every letter (my partner and I conveniently saw some invisible ducks on the lake) but I think the Echidna that we got wind of and saw strolling around a tree made up for the letters we couldn’t find.

Somewhere in the mix we played T-ball and a very confusing game of making up sounds and actions in four groups. Then having to act out the sounds and actions at the same time until we all did the same thing. It took a while, and my team was adamant to not conform, but in the end we did. The best activity I think was Patty’s stoke of genius of trying to make a Mexican wave out of bubbles. After fiddling around with the bubble containers and the wands that wouldn’t fit we all just relaxed and played with the bubbles until it was time for business. There were many attempts but I think we pretty much failed on making Patty’s’ dream come true, or at least I didn’t help very much because I only blew about three bubbles out of time with the wave we tried to make. But it was so much fun just acting like kids for a while and being silly with bubbles.

After that we had a rest before dinner and getting ready for the fluoro party, or as I like to call “ the time that I played the most stressful game of cards (cheat) ever” and that’s really saying something because I played go fish once with my roommate in hospital who was on the other side of the room and neither of us could get out of bed. Looking back now it was probably a funny sight of a bunch of us getting frustrated over a silly game of cheat. Soon after we all calmed down from that and I had had a lie down like a stressed out old person it was time to get ready for the fluoro party. There wasn’t much time or fuss until the fluoro party was officially on with Grant starting it off and then Holly and Alycia hosting the most colourful costume parade I have ever seen. After many dances and songs it was time for a well needed sleep after a great day.

On the last day my room had breakfast duty, which was like karma for me seen as I spent the whole camp saying “at least we won’t have breakfast duty”. Then we got ready for the last day and packed up our belongings and cleared out our rooms. We got into groups of four sometime during the day and did some awesome brain teasers before we all relaxed some more before lunch. We had a final peer leader meeting, that we had over the course of the camp before lunch then we all got our very own High Challenge certificate. As always we had magic moments that was pretty emotional, then it was time to bid the campsite farewell, become re-acquainted with our phones and off home. I would like to thank all the ChIPS and High Challenge staff for making the high challenge camp possible for us once again; it was, as always an amazing inspirational three days. Until next time.

Eliza Masterson

High Challenge Camp 2012

ChIPS 2012

ChIPS 2012

ChIPS "Disney" Camp 2012

Camp Reflections 2012

The 2012 ChIPS DISNEY CAMP from a Leader's perspective:

I've been a part of ChIPS for 4 years, and coming to camps for 3... but never have I been behind the scenes, planning and then actually running camp as I did this January 2012.
Think back, if you will to the morning of the 16th January, arriving bright and early to our pick up and drop off location, some of you knew a lot of people, some of you only knew Jarnia & Meagan. This is where the camp experience really starts. I overheard a few of you telling your parents that they could leave now, and a few of you asking them to stay until you got on the bus, either way it made me smile that it wasn't so different to my first camp morning (in case you were wondering I was one of the ones saying 'You can go now, I'll be fiiiiine!')

I decided to try and introduce myself to as many new faces that I could see, which turned out to be harder than I thought... there were so many of you! I've always loved this aspect of ChIPS, having people making sure I was okay about being there, and welcoming me, so it's nice to be able to give back. After this, was the business end of the morning, handing in your meds to the lovely medical staff, and socialising until the bus leaves. I was running around, putting goodie bags for the bus together, with Tamara and Beth, planning last minute games with James, making sure everyone was there and ready to go. It was chaos, and I loved it.

Camp had so many people attending that this year, for the first time ever (as far as I know) we had to have 2 buses. I'm pretty sure it was a different experience for the older ChIPPERS, and probably seemed something of the norm for the new ones. To be honest, other than handing out the food for our 2.5 hour trip to Cave Hill Creek, my bus trip is a blur.

Arriving at Cave Hill Creek is when everything started. Running around and making sure everyone knew which rooms they had, making sure everyone got a t-shirt, announcing teams, and the ever important secret theme. IT WAS DISNEY! Then after a quick lunch, everyone went off to their first activity and it from this point onwards I don't think I stopped moving for 3 days straight.

I tried to get around to watch you all do fantastically at Archery, scaling the bouldering wall (which looked impossible to me) laughing at people going past in the canoes, watching you all plan and rehearse your skits, and seeing awesome teamwork and creativity in craft. Then seeing you all come together for a big game of t-ball, in which much fun and many laughs were had. I didn't actually get the chance to do any of the activities, (except t-ball) so I hope you'll all allow me to infiltrate some of your teams in Jan 2013!

I think my favourite part of the camp this year was that everyone got right into team spirit, and were competitive about winning. Because being a competition and having those friendly "HAH my team's winning!" moments with each other is what makes it ChIPS annual camp and is something which I'd been missing in previous camps. It might just be me thinking that though I was in a daze for a good few of them!

It was amazing to see you all dress up as your favourite Disney characters, and show them off. My favourite by far, went to Kevin. Good job buddy, don't forget to include photos, so everyone in ChIPS can see! Sorry, off track. Writing is difficult. SO we had a dress up night, which was a fantastic night of fun, costume parading, and dancing. It never fails to get everyone up and about, no matter what. I love how much effort everyone puts in, and I especially love those people that turn up with no costume, and allow their friends to rope them into some rushed last minute costume that inevitably ends up looking awesome.

The first 2 days of camp, are usually a rush of crazy, fun activities, with a little time in between to sit down and write in warm fuzzies and have a bit of free time to chill out and soak up the atmosphere.

It's the last day, when our time is coming to an end. We have an award ceremony, in which the winning team is announced and every team gets a medal depending on where they placed. The winners were, in order from 1st to last- Peter Pan, Toy Story, Nemo, Dumbo and Pirates (of the Caribbean). During this time, we also hand out various certificates and awards. I was actually the recipient of the very special Chris Balnaves award. I've never been more at a loss for words at how honoured I was to have been given something so special. It's something that means a lot to the ChIPS community, and I will hold it in my heart and cherish it forever. We also do a very special thing called Magic Moments. I love this. It gives people a chance to anonymously let someone know, that they have made a difference in someone else's life, or inspired them, or even just they have made a new friend. It's such a beautiful thing, and everyone gets something different out of it.

Being one of the leader's of camp 2012 allowed me a great opportunity to see things I'd never noticed before; I was able to appreciate the work that past camp leaders had put into it, to make it the best possible camp for everyone and I was able to appreciate more, the ChIPPERS who use camp as a way to reconnect with those they may have not kept in contact with for awhile. Everyone is so inspiring in their own way and it was wonderful to have this different perspective. I look forward to doing it again in Jan 2013.

Jemma Young
Camp Co—Leader 2012

Run For The Kids 2012

On April 1st the time had come again for the Herald Sun Run for the Kids. Along with Meagan, Jarnia and myself some ChIPPERS were able to get together and participate in the 5.2km course. We had a beautiful banner and Tash, Kris and Emily did a great job carrying it around. The weather was kind to us and we were even lucky enough to get a few mentions over the announcements, one at the starting line and another at the finish.

We managed to cross the line all as a team and it was an awesome moment!
It was a really fun and special day and I am really proud to have been a part of it, so many people were there for many different reasons and that was really amazing but also humbling to know that we all came together to support the Royal Children's Hospital.

After the race they had some fun activities all set up and it was just a great environment to be in and the free powerade was so delicious! I managed to raise over $800 and excellent work to everyone who was involved and hopefully we will see you at next years race :)

Alycia Mack

Leadership Training 2012

On the 5th and 6th of July 2012 about 15 ChIPPERS took the opportunity to participate in Leadership Training. The training was held over two days where we all learnt many new things about not only ourselves but other ChIPPERS as well.

We played many icebreakers as there was a few new faces around, followed by games to get to know other a little bit better. We discussed what it meant to be a good leader and what important traits they had. Next we had two special guest speakers. One was a man who had a published book all about confidence when public speaking and how to make yourself more comfortable knowing your speaking to a big crowd. We split into small groups and practiced what he had taught us and then eventually came back to one big group and all got the chance to get up and speak. It was so incredible that he had only given us a few small tricks yet they helped so much.

The second guest speaker was a man named Tony. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at a young age. He discussed with us the struggles he faced growing up in a time where people weren't as accepting about differences as they are today and the difference that public speaking had made to him. We got to have lunch with Tony and it was so great to be able to have a conversation with him over lunch.

On day two we played games based around working as a team and being confident in each other's decisions. We all stood in a rope circle and each time we stepped out as a group we had to decide how much smaller we could make the circle but at the same time all still fit inside. This seemed easy but the smaller and smaller the circle got the more arguments arose. People had different opinions on how we would all fit in the circle and it was awesome to see that in the end we all decided on the same thing and started agreeing.
Leadership Training was an amazing opportunity and I was so lucky to be well enough to participate this year. I learnt so many things about myself and would recommend it to anybody who hasn't taken part yet!

Tasha Payne

A Letter To Parents...

To all parents

Making the decision to go to CHIPS was hard for me, I was asked a year ago, but I just didn't want to go. I wasn't nervous, but I didn't want to be with other kids who might be sick, and I didn't want to talk about what I had. Meagan, the leader never gave up and neither did my mum and dad, and I eventually decided to go to the two day program.
I have experienced lots of ups and downs throughout my life, so while I was walking to the program, I was wondering what it would be like. I wasn't nervous, well maybe just a little bit.

When I walked through that door, I saw Meagan, Tamara, Sarah and two other students who had already arrived and were playing Jenga, Sarah immediately insisted that I must join in and I did. I can tell you the two students were not shy at all, they kept the conversations going.

More kids arrived looking nervous and I am sure they were feeling like their stomach was full of butterflies, but after the two days they walked out feeling like the happiest kids in the world.

There were a total of six of us and I'll tell you what…we had a ball. For the whole day we did stuff that was always entertaining: games, painting, drawing, music and opening up to have a group conversation. ChIPS do a great job at not leaning towards asking the students what illness they have in the conversations, they are welcome to share how it impacts on them, but they don't *have* to share what they have, that's totally up to them, the peer leaders will understand.

We have about 3 breaks, the leaders have organised food for the kids, so your child doesn't have to bring his/her own food along. You don't have to do the childish, put your hand up to go to the bathroom, you just walk out the door, you can ask to go lie down or take any kind of medication.

It took me a while to decide to do CHIPS, and now that I have, I really believe in what they do and how it can help you.

Message for your child

Hey guys,

I know you probably have that feeling where you're just not sure and you don't want to go, I had that same feeling when I found out about CHIPS. But I insist that you go, you will be a little bit shaky at the beginning, but you won't be the only person. Trust me, these guys will respect you and help you if needed. You should come.

Curtis Reeder

Sydney ChIPS 2012

This year in Sydney ChIPS has been a big one; we have had out new coordinator Katie Wagner now for a year, and what a year it has been.
This past year, Sydney ChIPS has welcomed some fresh new faces. I was able to run some groups with them, and it was amazing to see them grow over the 8-week talking group.
Socials this year have been amazing. We were so lucky to receive tickets to not only one major circus but two! We attended Circus Oz at the beginning of the year, and early in November we attended Cirque Du Soleil, thanks to one of our major sponsors, Ottomin. We have also run some movie nights, an IMAX trip, dinners and lunches at local restaurants, and picnics in the park.

This year we have also had on offer to ChIPS some leadership workshops. The people who have attended have gained some useful tips from these programs and are excited to be able to facilitate the talking groups next year.

One of the things that got me so excited this year was becoming extremely involved with not only groups but the planning of our end of year camp! This will be run over the weekend of the 16th-18th November and we have picked a super hero theme to work with the concept of “battling a chronic illness”. Camp really brings all the older and newer ChIPS kids closer, so I am really looking forward to watching these bonds form.

On a sad note, we lost one of our core members to Cystic Fibrosis in October…Brooke was a strong and amazing girl, and captured the hearts of everyone in her 16 years here. We miss her terribly, and have all been brought closer in the last month. Our annual ChIPS camp award, awarded to one person who truly embodies the spirit of ChIPS on camp, will this year be dedicated to the memory of Brooke.

This year we have focused more on fundraising. We decided a toy raffle before Christmas would be a good idea so we asked the ChIPS members to each donate a toy and ask friends and family for toy donations, too. The response has been overwhelming, with three massive toy hampers now ready to raffle off and all the funds coming back directly to ChIPS.

2013 has already been marked as the year of “Getting the word out there”, where we hope to raise the profile of ChIPS in and outside of the hospital, and also raise awareness of some of the chronic illnesses our members live with. We are already planning more fundraising events and socials for next year, and there is also talk about a new venue for camp …all very exciting :-) Sydney ChIPS is also going to be bringing a new arm of the program to work alongside the existing ChIPS, working specifically with hematology patients. Rather than an 8 week talking group, it will be an 8 month program, to fit in with when they come into the hospital for their transfusions.

This year has been amazing on so many levels, and I just can’t wait for next year. So many great things to look forward to - bring on 2013!!!

Alyce Hamer - Sydney ChIPS

Who was Liz Dixon?

At the 2012 annual ChIPS camp, I was very overwhelmed and humbled to be awarded the Liz Dixon award. The annual award was formed to remember a very much loved ChIPPER, Liz Dixon, who passed away after a courageous fight with Cystic Fibrosis. An initiative of her family and loved ones, Liz's award was created to inspire and encourage ChIPS members for their creative talents within the ChIPS community.

I remember that at the time of receiving the award, I felt an incredible surge of emotion for a girl whom I had never had the pleasure of meeting. Liz and I were similar in age, and from her photograph I saw a vivacious, clever and impossibly beautiful young woman, whose smile showed a glint of defiance and a wicked sense of humour. But, as I framed the certificate in my bedroom, I began to wonder about the young woman behind the beaming smile.

I had planned to write an article on Liz. However, the responses from Liz's very proud parents and were so articulate, and so filled with Liz's undeniable zest for life, that I felt they were the two best people to introduce Liz to a new generation of ChIPS members. I have no doubt that after reading about Liz, like me you will feel a greater passion for your own life, and learn to just 'Build a bridge and walk over it'.

Jess xx

Who Was Elizabeth?

Liz was a member of ChIPS for around 5 or 6 years. She joined after developing a serious illness, which was a complication of her Cystic Fibrosis. She died when she was 21 years old while waiting for a lung transplant.

Liz was the middle child in a family of three. Like her older sister Katherine and her younger brother Chris, she suffered from Cystic Fibrosis. She had been fairly well most of her primary school years and well into her teenage years. She attended our local primary school, Syndal North Primary School, which was just down the road from home.

She loved being with her friends, enjoyed school, loved her pets (and she had *many*). She loved creating things as she was very artistic, and participated in all kinds of sport. During her primary school years she was a keen netballer, attended Brownies and Guides and was a member of the Ceres
Callisthenics Club competing in many local and state competitions. She swam, played tennis and was a keen little pianist.

During her secondary years she went to Korowa Anglican Girls School until year 10, before moving to Wesley in Glen Waverley where she enjoyed the challenges of a co-ed environment and a slightly broader curriculum, particularly in the arts. Throughout her secondary years she continued with her piano and was also a keen flautist leading one of her school orchestras at Korowa. She completed a Duke of Edinburgh Award and was a regular supporter and fundraiser for Guide Dogs Victoria (she loved Labradors) and also raised funds for the Cancer Councils Daffodil Day and the Royal Children's Hospital Appeal.

Liz was always an extremely social person, socially minded and quite an organiser with many of her friend's group activities being arranged by her. She was bright, vibrant, sharp witted and had a great sense of humour. Social occasions at home occurred regularly and were noisy beyond belief; full of laughter, music and the joy of young people's voices.
This is one of the things that we as her family missed the most when she died. Where there was

Liz was artistic and her chosen path for her tertiary education was Scientific Photography at RMIT. This presented huge challenges for her as her health failed and she struggled to manage the huge cameras and field activities with her diminutive size and failing strength. She had the most gorgeous boyfriend, Tim, who she met at work, and who also joined ChIPS to support her. Between them they helped arrange many social activities and camps as part of the reference committee and were heavily involved with the production of the Wrapper each year.

“The most important thing about Elizabeth was that while she was a young woman with CF, she never allowed it to define her as a person.”

She chose to live every minute of her life to the full, embracing every opportunity and was forever strongly committed to her friends and family. She was joyful and strong, seldom cried, took control and never bowed down to her illness if she could help it. One of her favourite saying was ***“Build a bridge and walk over it, ”*** whenever an obstacle appeared to be in her way. She closed all her correspondence with ***“Sunshine and smiles forever***”. I think these two sayings actually say a lot about how she viewed life.

As her family we were always in awe of her drive and so proud of her spirit and motivation to succeed, her capacity to love and to give unreservedly to her friends.

What made Elizabeth decide to join ChIPS and how old was she at the time?

When Elizabeth was 15 she suffered a spontaneous pneumothorax (a sudden collapsed lung) after a school concert which then became complicated by pneumonia. Recovery was long and hard and involved a long stay at RCH. Following this her health declined quite rapidly. Liz was encouraged to see a psychologist at the Adolescent Health Unit by her treating doctors . She quickly and vehemently rejected the need for this but it was also suggested at the time that she might benefit from attending ChIPS.

She accepted this recommendation more gracefully and attended a couple of sessions to assess whether she felt attending would be of benefit to her. She quickly embraced the goals and directions of ChIPS and the members of the group at the time - forming some strong friendships that lasted for the rest of her life. Mark, the group leader at the time, was an inspirational person who encouraged Liz to develop her leadership skills and personal confidence.
She immediately seemed to realise that ChIPS would help her develop her capacity to cope with her illness.

She understood that it was a powerful mechanism for building self confidence and life skills, not just for herself but many of her new friends. She also learned that for some life was not always fair as she lost a couple of very precious and dear ChIPS friends along the way.

“She really embraced the fact that working collaboratively within the group was an amazing way for people with chronic illness to take control and define their own direction”

What did Liz give to the ChIPS community?

Liz gave completely of herself to the ChIPS community engaging with full commitment to whatever task she had to do. I remember even in the last months of her life when she was really not well enough even to attend the meetings, she would refuse assistance or a ride, struggling to maintain her independence, and off she would go in her little car, her oxygen cylinder tucked under her arm in a bag along with all her notes. It was a focus and a reason to be. She was part of the reference group at the time and apart from spending a lot of time helping organize and checking out venues for activities like movies, arranging outings etc, and she was the treasurer for the group at the time compiling financial reports, and of course she was very active in the production of the Wrapper annually. I know too from our conversations at home about group activities that she had participated in, that she tried hard to encourage others and to be supportive as they struggled with their life challenges .

Liz was not always able to attend activities that she helped arrange because she was not the only group member with CF. Because of the cross infection risk, decisions had to be made as to which CF sufferers were going, for instance, on the camp.

How was Liz perceived within the ChIPS community?

Well I think she was very much loved by the group at the time because of the warmth of her personality, her capacity to laugh and enjoy life, her capacity to try to stay positive and her refusal to feel sorry for herself.
She certainly developed friendships within ChIPS which endured until she died. She assisted sometimes with the ChIPS stall that was held over at RCH with one her friends and her mum as an extra volunteer.
She also attended outings outside ChIPS with the young people that she had met, and attended funerals of members who passed away. She made the effort to go the extra mile if she could.
After her death, we received many, many personal messages from the ChIPS community reflecting great sadness and sorrow for the loss of a wonderful friend.

What do you believe Liz’s ongoing legacy is within ChIPS?

I hope that Liz’ legacy is to remain an inspiration. I hope the award encourages group members to embrace life as she did, and to write about their experiences in a way that informs others about staying positive, or trying to build something from life’s challenges and also that it is important to share, to respect each other and most of all to try and achieve their own potential.

If Liz were here today, what would she say to fellow ChIPPERS to encourage them in their lives whilst living with chronic illness?

Build a bridge and walk over it!

Personal Story

There is going to come a moment in your life in which you wake up and realize that you have been crying forever. You have sobbed for the disease which is robbing you of your life, wept for the pain that you must endure in each breath and gasped for the tragedy that your life has become.

It is only normal, perfectly natural. We have Chronic Illness. We see the journey we must take, regardless of whether we wish to or not. We are aware of all that we must endure, and we understand that for most of us, the words ‘*cured*’ and *‘remission’* are never going to be stamped onto our files.

Recently I was interviewed by a Med student for an assignment on Chronic Illness. Across our coffees she turned to me and asked;
‘What has changed in your attitude from when you first got sick, to now?’
I turned silent, and a sad smile caught in my throat. Finally, I whispered to her.
‘Everything.’

There was once a time when I cried when I woke up, simply for that very reason. I rotted in hospital beds and wheelchairs, uninterested as to whether I lived or did not. All I asked was that my body could make up its mind, so that I could make my peace. And one day I woke up, and realised that I had been crying for years. I was no closer to a cure, nor any further away from death. But I just didn’t want to cry anymore.
So I started smiling instead.

When you are chronically ill, every moment of every day is swallowed whole by disease. Every breath, every burst of laughter, every vomit and every sob. It is always there, threatening. Threatening to take another piece of you and threatening to take you entirely.

But after a few years I stopped trying to shut it out. I unlocked the doors, and asked it to wipe its feet on the **‘Welcome’** mat. You cannot run, and you cannot hide. And God knows I tried. But spending your life running when you cannot walk is so very tiring.
I just didn’t want that life anymore.

So I stopped running. I let it snuggle in against me in the thick of night. And I started to live. In the mornings, my body is at its most broken. It has been in its temporary casket for twelve hours. It is finally at rest, and wishes to stay there forever. I am a bag of bones, shuffling from beneath the covers. I could weep that in the mornings I cannot walk. Instead my speakers blast **‘I’m sexy and I know it’** and I smile with the knowledge that I am a terrible dancer.

I must clear the mucous from my lungs and so I heave into the sink. And then I clean my teeth, clear away any residual infection and wear the brightest red lipstick that I can find. And for the remainder of the day I am Marilyn Monroe, and no one can convince me otherwise.

Vogue tells me that *'black is the new black'*. But Vogue got it wrong; Colour is my catwalk, and I am its supermodel. Layers of blue, green and yellow litter my bedroom floor and the rest of my body. I reach just less than 6 foot, but heels are a must. They are chipping away at my already brittle bones, but I don't have time for a sense of boredom. I am beautiful, and I am fabulous, and no disease will rob me of my rainbow.

By the time that I arrive at University I am a 6 foot Glamazon. The Tracksuits stare at me, unsure of what to make of the girl that wears red lipstick and all the colours of a Christmas lights. But they don't understand; my life is too short to be comfortable.

In hospital, I race my wheelchair and turn IV poles into scooters. I stay up until the wee hours of the night with my roommates who are in their final weeks. We quietly chat, and bond over the TV shows whose season final they will never see.

I dress as a football player to my Specialist appointments in the weeks that Essendon are triumphant, and remind them that I am to marry Angus Monfries; He just doesn't know it yet. I connect the dot with my surgery scars, and make a smiley face so that they don't scare my little brother anymore.

When my hair falls out, I invest in the most brilliant of headscarves, and spend my days pretending to be a pirate. I am too unwell to stand in the shower, so instead I sit in the pool of tiles and close my eyes. And for four minutes, I am beneath a waterfall. And it is the most beautiful waterfall of all.

I skid on the early morning frost in my slippers, and I make cubby houses in my bedroom with sheets when I am too broken to leave the house. I wave glow sticks beneath the cold night sky, and I battle the resulting chest infections with a smile on my face.
This does not mean that it is easy; I bleed, I vomit, I retch and I scream out in pain every single day. Some days I feel my body growing weaker, and I wonder just how much can be done. My heart is trodden on by those who cannot cope with all that runs through my veins. I whisper goodbye to friends, and I weep in cold waiting rooms.
When I first became chronically ill nearly seven years ago, I was certain that nothing would ever be ok again.

And it is not okay; not yet.
But I am *happy.*
And that's more than what most people can say.
There may not be a cure for you, nor relief from chronic illness. Life may never be fair, and it may never be okay. But with time, you can find that chronic illness has been the greatest gift of all.

And one day, you might wake up and smile. And you will realize that you have the most beautiful life of all.

By Anonypanda

Farewells

This time the person leaving us is the most kind, caring, considerate, loving, accepting, welcoming, warm, wise, helpful, insightful and interesting person any of us have ever had the pleasure to meet.

That is why it is with great sadness that this year we say good-bye to Tamara Myors. Tamara joined ChIPS in 2003 and I joined in 2006. Tamara was peer leader to myself and many others, she gave great support and advice to any who asked for it. She was always there if any of us ever had a problem and never had a bad word to say about anybody. So Tamara I think that it is safe for me to say on behalf of the ChIPERS and ChIPS staff we will miss having you around and we also wish you luck in any future endeavours you wish to follow.

May all your dreams come true and don't forget about us.

Beth Sleeman

Kendall first joined ChIPS around nine years ago. She became interested in becoming a ChIPS member after learning about the program from a Starlight Captain. Kendall has been a familiar face in the ChIPS community for many years. And despite living in Ballarat has been on Reference Committee for a year.

Kendall always brings a positive energy to camp and always has memorable costumes such as her pink costume, and is always happy to meet new people. She will be very much missed within the ChIPS community and we wish her well in her future endeavours.

Eliza Masterson

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