



**BARRETSTOWN**  
a seriousfun camp

YOUR  
**SERIOUS  
FUN**  
NEWSLETTER

**INSIDE:**

12 pages packed with **MORE FUN** thanks to volunteers, like **Ashleigh on page 6.**

**MORE MAGIC** thanks to supporters, like **Brenda on page 8.**

And even **MORE INSPIRING STORIES** thanks to campers, like **Madi on page 10.**

**WELCOME**  
to our biggest and  
most magical year  
yet - all thanks  
to you!



# DEAR FRIENDS

**Welcome  
to the biggest and  
most magical  
year yet at  
Barretstown!**

**Last year, I had the honour of announcing that our gates were reopening to campers, and we were welcoming the first families back to Barretstown in-person again.**

**This year, our camps aren't just back. They are bigger, better and more magical than ever before!**

**For the first time in our history, we're going to serve over 10,000 children and family members! It's a huge and ambitious goal – but because of you, it's happening.**

**So many seriously ill children and their families were left isolated by Covid. They've been waiting and waiting for the magic that only Barretstown can give.**

**HOME SWEET HOME  
COTTAGE RENOVATIONS**

**The cottages are home for our campers and families. The redesign and upgrade project will increase capacity, comfort, style and sustainability.**

**WELCOME  
ABOARD!**

**Keep your eye out for our lovely new double decker bus we'll be taking on the road this year!**

**10,650  
CAMPER'S IN 2022!**

**For the very first time in our history, Barretstown will serve over 10,000 campers this year! And we're delighted to welcome back our children only summer camps.**



And now because of you, their wait is over.

Amazing supporters, like you, are digging deep to help us raise the funds we need. Volunteers, old and new, are offering their time and incredible energy.

And together, we're spreading more fun and more magic to children affected by serious

illness, and their families, than ever before.

I hope you enjoy this special edition – celebrating all that you're making possible.

***Thank you so much,***

Dee  
Dee Ahearn, CEO.



**PAUL'S HIDEOUT!**  
OFFICIALLY OPENS!

"Paul's Hideout" - our new three-story accommodation lodge for our amazing volunteers who stay at camp while volunteering.



**GROOVE**  
FOR YOUR FOOD

The Dining Hall has reopened! And is filled with peals of laughter, once again, as our much loved "Groove for your food" tradition returns!

**7 MILLION**  
REASONS TO DIG DEEP

Supporters up and down the country are going above and beyond to help us raise the €7 million we need this year to reach more campers and spread more magic. You can too – just visit [www.barretstown.org/donate](http://www.barretstown.org/donate)





# DARRAGH'S STORY

An exciting solo step forward!

Our in person, child-only, camps are back! And we're delighted to be welcoming Darragh, who you may remember reading about last Christmas, to his first one! We talked to his mum and dad, Paola and Karl, about the impact of Barretstown since their first family camp. And how excited Darragh is about his next solo step forward, thanks to supporters like you.



Scan the QR code to meet Darragh and Karl as they share their personal journey.

## A magical break away...

Darragh was at one of his lowest points, six months into his Leukaemia treatment, when we were invited to attend a family camp at Barretstown. It was incredible. Life changing!

He came away a completely different child. It gave his shattered confidence the biggest boost. And from singing and dancing, to games popping balloons, and the camaraderie – it brought him back. It allowed our child, to just be a child again.

When he left, he just felt so much more comfortable in himself. He didn't really wear his hat anymore. He didn't care about covering up his bald head. He felt stronger and knew he wasn't on his own.



*Darragh with the Outreach Team at his school.*

## An exciting solo step forward...

Darragh is now at the end of his three-and-a-half-year treatment, and beyond excited to be getting ready for his first solo camp.

Cancer is cruel. It throws children into such an adult world, stealing so much of the joy and magic of childhood. In one way it makes them grow up too fast. And yet, in another way, it prevents it by taking their independence away.

Thank you so much to every one of you who has supported Barretstown and helped our Darragh on his journey.

## A magic lesson for everyone...

But the support didn't stop there. After family camp, the Barretstown School Outreach Team came to Darragh's school and sprinkled a little magic there too.

They did a puppet show in front of the whole class, helping them understand what Darragh was going through and how to help him. They adored it!! And it meant so much to Darragh.

It allowed him to share his experience with his classmates. And they were just so incredibly supportive.



*Darragh with his Mum & Dad at camp in Summer 2021.*



*Darragh at camp in Spring 2020.*

## MED SHED SUPPORT!

Our camps would not be possible without the amazing Med Shed and the nurses and doctors who volunteer there (like Brenda who you can read about on page 8). They make sure all our campers medical needs are looked after, so everyone can focus on just having some serious fun. **Thank you!**





# BARRETSTOWN MAGIC REACHES UP AND OUT

## New Adolescent Young Adult (AYA) Programme launches!



Many young adults affected by serious illness can have a particularly difficult time as they find themselves stuck between two worlds – too old for childhood services, too young for adult ones. Our newly devised AYA Programme provides support at this pivotal time in their lives - with fun therapeutic recreation-based activities and specialised education workshops. We'd our first hugely successful trial last November and this year will see 3 weekend programmes delivered.



## New Residential Transition Year Programme rolls out!



An exciting new Residential Transition Year Programme has been launched. The 4 night residential programmes takes place on our 500-acre campus, welcoming 25+ students to experience what life is like for children affected by serious illness and learn about Barretstown's life changing therapeutic programmes. The programme covers a broad scope of content to meet the needs of TY students and takes the Department of Education's criteria into account, offering students an opportunity to learn new skills and experience a little Barretstown magic.



## Two critical Outreach Programmes tackle isolation...

**Our Outreach Programmes provide the opportunity to bring the magic of Barretstown beyond our castle gates, to hospitals, schools and communities around Ireland.**

### Hospital Outreach Programme (HOP)

From Cork, to Belfast, we bring the magic of Barretstown to the bedside of children in hospital and to outpatient clinics. By offering unique, creative and developmentally appropriate activities and interactions, we help to restore joy and laughter in a time often laden with fear, stress and uncertainty.



## THANK YOU

Thank you for making these innovations possible and for helping us to bring the magic of Barretstown beyond our castle gates, to those who need it most!

### School Outreach Programme

Barretstown's School Outreach Programme brings the magic of Barretstown to a child's school. The programme aims to create a fun, interactive and child-friendly approach to explaining a serious illness to the class whilst dispelling myths associated with it. This is a free programme that encourages children to be supportive of their classmate and reduces the likelihood of bullying, exclusion, confusion or anxiety. The programme fosters connections and understanding in a uniquely fun Barretstown way.





# ASHLEIGH'S STORY

**A journey from camper to volunteer.**

This summer, we are so excited to be welcoming a new (but familiar) face to our volunteer team - Ashleigh Kiernan! We first met Ashleigh when she was 9-years old and in the midst of a gruelling battle with Leukaemia. And we count ourselves so lucky to have her amazing, bubbly personality join us now as a Cara volunteer!



## Cancer steals the fun from childhood...

When I was younger, I was a total chatterbox but that changed when I got sick. I became much quieter and missed out on the child part of childhood. The fun disappeared.

I attended my first camp when I was eight years old and I always use the analogy of a battery when talking about my first camp. It was like I went down to camp as a dead battery and came back fully charged. I was talking again, I was laughing. It was like magic...I was me again.

When you go to Barretstown you catch up on all the fun you missed out on. The activities, all the Caras - it's just pure happiness down there. You make so many friends in similar situations and get to do all these activities you don't usually do in normal day to day life.



*Ashleigh  
December 2012.*

*Hear an 11-year-old Ashleigh talking about her experiences at Barretstown back in 2014.*

## Paying the magic and joy forward...

I remember the first time I decided I wanted to be a volunteer. I had a Cara who had been a camper herself, which at the time I found so cool. It was the first time I was like 'this is something I could do too'. I was about 10 at the time. From that day on I was counting down the days until I was nineteen and old enough to apply.

I would love to be able to make a difference in the lives of the campers attending camp, just how my Caras had such an impact on me. I would love to help them in any way I can.

You don't have to be on the seriously ill side of things like I was to be impacted by camp. It impacts everyone who interacts with it in any kind of way. I think volunteering at camp is such a precious experience to be part of. I would recommend it to everyone thinking about it.

Magic and joy from start to finish.

## Barretstown has been by my side through it all...

In many ways, I have seen camp grow as I've grown. I attended a few summer camps throughout and also after my treatment. Barretstown has always been there for me and my family since day one. It has always been a safe space even while returning to normal daily life post-treatment.

I had the opportunity to attend a teen camp later on and also got accepted onto the Camp Leadership Programme. Unfortunately, this was online due to COVID but it was still fun and a great experience. Most recently, I had the chance to take part in the trial of the incredible new Adolescent Young Adult Programme.

Barretstown has seen me grow over the last 11 years and I have seen it develop and grow too. I have been on such a journey with Barretstown and I know it will only continue with some of the best moments still to come.



*Ashleigh as  
a Cara at camp,  
Summer 2022.*



*Ashleigh enjoying camp  
in September 2011.*

# CARAS, WE NEED YOU!

We need more Caras to join us this year. And promise all our volunteers lots of fun, lots of smiles and an unforgettable experience that will truly make a difference to the lives of children with serious illnesses.

**To apply visit [www.barrestown.org/apply](http://www.barrestown.org/apply)**



# MORE CORPORATES

Creating even more magic, at work

## A special partnership evolves

Our partnership with Center Parcs began back in 2019 and has evolved, as our needs have - with the amazing team there innovating and adapting their support, to help us through some pretty unique times.

In 2020, during the pandemic, twelve members of the Center Parcs entertainment and programme team volunteered on site for a full 12 weeks to support the delivery of our virtual programme.

And now, with our biggest and most magical year yet planned, they've been pulling out all the stops to help us make it happen. They've a dedicated team of champions who are organising fundraising events to help us raise the vital extra funds we need.

They are volunteering directly at camps too – ensuring we have the extra hands-on help we need to give the 10,000 children and families we plan to reach this year, the very best experience possible. We can't thank the team at Center Parcs Longford Forest and all our corporate partners enough for their support.

*"Center Parcs and Barretstown are the perfect partnership. We both want to help families spend quality time together, where they can reconnect, explore and learn new things. But for the families visiting Barretstown, time is precious and we're incredibly humbled that we can play a part in helping them make memories together and giving children the opportunity to just be children."*

- Daragh Feighery, Village Director,  
Center Parcs Longford Forest.

## Getting to work creating more magic

If you'd like to get your workplace to partner with Barretstown, contact Caroline at [caroline.tobin@barretstown.org](mailto:caroline.tobin@barretstown.org) or Eleanor at [eleanor.ryan@barretstown.org](mailto:eleanor.ryan@barretstown.org). There are so many ways you can choose to get involved and support us...



## NEED A VENUE?

With a mix of wonderful indoor and outdoor facilities, Barretstown can provide the perfect unique venue for your corporate event - be it a team meeting, conference, product launch, team building day or even an overnight stay. Barretstown can deliver the ideal balance of facilities and activities to meet your requirements no matter how big, small or unusual your event might be.



# BRENDA'S STORY

Leaving a legacy of magic behind!

Brenda is a paediatric nurse practitioner who since 1997 has been making the epic journey from Seattle in the United States to our campus in Co. Kildare to volunteer at The Med Shed for summer camps at Barretstown. She spoke to us about why she's decided to leave a gift in her Will to make sure the Serious Fun and magic of camp lives on.



## Where the magic began...

It was back in the Summer of 1995 or 1996, when I was nursing in paediatric oncology that I first met a nurse who'd spent a summer at Barretstown. Her experiences inspired me to get in touch with Barretstown. And in the Summer of 1997, I embarked on my first trip to volunteer at camp.

That was it. I was hooked. And have been coming back, to help at the Med-Shed ever since.

It's an epic journey. One year, from the time I left the red door at the castle, to turning the key in my door in Seattle, it was 23.5 hours! But it was worth it. It always is.

You come to camp to help, but you end up getting so much more than you give.

## A million little reasons...

When asked why I do it – what my favourite thing is – there's no one reason.

It's a million little ones that combine to create this truly magical experience, that will forever hold a piece of my heart and soul.

There's the setting of the magical medieval castle. The country of Ireland and its incredible people. And the unbelievable staff and volunteers in Barretstown.

You experience the best of humanity where kindness is found at every turn. People from all over the world who give up a week of their time to put on funny clothes and costumes, paint their faces and wear their clothes backwards – to do whatever it takes to make a child smile.

But most of all, it's the honour and privilege of hearing the laughter for yourself. Being one of the lucky few, to see the magic in action first-hand.

## Leaving a legacy of magic behind...

It was a few years ago now, filling in details for an insurance policy at work, that I first thought about leaving something behind me for Barretstown. I've no children myself and I couldn't think of a better beneficiary for my new policy to go to.

Since then, I've added another policy. And made Barretstown one of the main beneficiaries of my overall estate in my will too.

It means a lot to think I'll be helping camps happen long past when I'm not able to come to them physically. To know I'll still be able to help a child get back a part of their childhood again.

And I'd love, in some small way, sharing my story today inspires someone else to think about leaving a gift too.

Together we can leave a small footprint of ourselves in this magical place where children can be children and raise a little hell at the same time.



**LIKE TO LEAVE  
A LEGACY?**

If you'd like to find out more about leaving a gift in your will, you can contact Clare by emailing...

**[clare.martin@barrestown.org](mailto:clare.martin@barrestown.org)** or calling **(045) 863 100**



# MORE SUPPORTERS

Creating even more magic, at home

## A huge heartfelt thank you!

*I'm Clare Martin and on behalf of all the team here at Barretstown, I'd like to say a huge heartfelt thank you to all the incredibly generous individuals who have donated to us over the past 12 months. As Individual Giving Manager here at Barretstown, I see first-hand how your continued kind support allows us to be there for families when they need us most.*

*This year – we have an absolutely massive target! We need to raise over €7 million (€1.2 million more than last year) to serve our greatest number of campers ever! But with more supporters like you by our side, creating even more magic from homes in every corner of Ireland, I know we can reach the 10,650 children and their families that are waiting on us.*

**THANK YOU!**

*Your support is truly valued and appreciated.*

## Choosing to **support more regularly...**

To help us create more magic moments for campers across Ireland, many supporters are choosing to give a gift more regularly. Like Elaine, who has shared why she decided to donate monthly to Barretstown.



“No one knows the day or the hour when they could be faced with the battle & sadness of a childhood serious illness. To know our donations will help in some way to ease the struggle for a family is very important. These children & families need the time to smile & laugh together & that's what Barretstown provides - a safe space for fun.”

- Elaine, Monthly Donor

For more on donating monthly visit [www.barrestown.org/donate](http://www.barrestown.org/donate)

## At no extra cost your donation can be worth even more...

CHY3 COMPLETE =

**45% MORE  
MAGIC SPREAD!**

Did you know that by simply completing a CHY3 Tax Form you can help Barretstown reclaim thousands of Euro from Revenue at no extra cost to you?

If you donate €250 (€21+ p/m) or more in a calendar year, we can reclaim 45% of the value of your donation back from Revenue – at no extra cost to you.

You've already made magic with your kind donation to Barretstown, now spreading even more magic, couldn't be easier.

Simply fill in and submit your CHY3 form online by visiting...  
[www.charitytax.ie/barrestown](http://www.charitytax.ie/barrestown).

Or get in touch with us and we'll send you a form in the post to complete and return. Simply email [fundraising@barrestown.org](mailto:fundraising@barrestown.org) or call us on (045) 863 100.



# MADI'S STORY

Where siblings are never forgotten

Madi attended our first sibling camp after reopening. She's big sister to Isaac, who you may remember reading about. He suffers from a rare, undiagnosed genetic condition that's led to him being in and out of hospital since the day he was born. Here, mum Ashley, talks about how much Barretstown means to Madi.



## Some serious responsibility...

My wee boy Isaac's condition means he has a severely compromised immune system and gets ill very easily.

He has been in and out of hospital since birth – with everything from pneumonia to meningitis and swine flu.

During the pandemic, I think a lot of people experienced what it's like to live in fear of passing something on and making a vulnerable loved one very ill.

That's been most of Madi's life. Before covid ever hit.



Did you know? At Barretstown we have a special 6-day summer camp designed just for siblings aged between 7 - 17, who have a brother or sister who are being treated for, or are recovering from, a serious illness.

## A special understanding...

The Caras and teams care for the child not only physically but emotionally. They are so kind and respectful to what these siblings are going through. And how pause has been pressed on their childhood too.

Madi just adores sibling camp. She's met friends who are walking the same life path as her. Children she can really connect with about her emotions and feelings around life, with a sibling who has complex needs.

Friends who understand what it's like to have to be left with relatives all the time as parents care for their sick sibling. Or what it's like to have to be so careful of bugs and germs all the time.

*The Keenan Family, Barretstown 2021.*



## Having some serious fun...

Sibling camp at Barretstown is just absolutely fantastic. It's a place where the sibling of the sick child gets to have their own respite and fun. And the attention they need and deserve.

They no longer have to take a step back while everyone's focused in on the care of their sibling. At these camps it's all about them. And only them.

It gives stability, structure and a welcome break.

And as parents it's so amazing to know Madi is being looked after so exceptionally well. That she is getting to enjoy activities freely with friends. That she's centre stage for a change.

# THANK YOU!

Thank you for supporting Barretstown and making these sibling camps happen. They are as important as the main family and summer camps - maybe even more so. Because as Madi says...

**Barretstown never forgets the siblings!**



# MORE COMMUNITIES

Creating even more magic everywhere...

## #DublinMountainsChallenge

Our incredible fundraisers continue to come up with new, exciting and fun ways to raise vital funds for Barretstown and help Press Play for so many families affected by serious illness.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our community champions for continuing to support Barretstown.

Like our amazing fundraising hikers and all those who helped on the day to allow our Dublin Mountains Challenge return again in May this year!

### RCSI

Students from the Royal College of Surgeons Paediatrics Society held their annual Teddy Bears Hospital, in their Dublin city centre college and raised funds (and fun!) for Barretstown. Thank you all!



### Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Our community champions, and all of us here at Barretstown, have been thrilled to finally start meeting all of you – our amazing fundraisers and supporters – at in-person events again. But in case we haven't had a chance to say it face to face to you yet – **thank you!** To all of you who have ran, cycled, swam, walked, cut your hair, donated your birthdays, crafted, sung, worn brilliant Christmas jumpers, raffled, danced, quizzed or donated towards someone else's fundraiser...you are all heroes!! And we appreciate you so much!

### Fancy taking on a challenge?

Wonderful **Anna Cooper** recently grew her hair super long over many months and then gathered sponsorship for cutting her hair to raise funds for Barretstown! She raised over €3,500!! An incredible achievement!

#### Want to part of the Barretstown magic?

You can organise an event of your own - from cake sales to quizzes there are so many ways you can help fundraise for Barretstown, the only requirement is that you have serious fun doing so!

Contact [fundraising@barretstown.org](mailto:fundraising@barretstown.org) to have a chat about ways to get involved.



### The Lug

The Lug up The Lug! An incredible crew from Dublin Civil Defence took on a sponsored climb of Lugnaquilla, Leinster's highest mountain, in full Fire PPE, to raise over €4K for Barretstown! Thank you, heroes!





On behalf of all our families and campers

# A MASSIVE THANK YOU

for all the magic you've created!

“

*I felt like I'd been holding my breath for years. Waiting. Hoping. Struggling. Worrying. And just surviving. At Barretstown, we started living again.*

Ann Marie, Emily & Cormac's mum

*In Barretstown we heard a sound that was missing from our lives for the months prior. A sound no family home should be without. Laughter.*

Louise, Alex & Cal's mum

*Seeing a confident and smiling child was the biggest thing we took away from our weekend... we hadn't seen that side of him in so long.*

Agnes, Alex's mum

*There is nothing she can't do if she puts her mind to it now. Barretstown gave her back her confidence and she has brought that with her since.*

Patricia, Aine's mum

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**For more information on ways you can get involved,  
contact us on (045) 863 100 or [fundraising@barretstown.org](mailto:fundraising@barretstown.org)**

**BARRETSTOWN**  
a seriousfun camp

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