



# COASTAL CONNECTIONS

AN UPDATE FROM CAMP ARANZAZU

APRIL 2023

## A LETTER *from our* PRESIDENT



### Camp Family,

What a great year 2022 was for the 1,339 campers who came through our gates! More important than the numbers, though, was the experience they had. They were able to be with others who understand what they are going

through, and to challenge themselves. At Camp Aranzazu, they could be themselves and be celebrated for who they are.

We believe that our intentional approach to camping makes a difference for our campers. We focus on helping campers gain a sense of belonging and self-efficacy, and we measure our results.

### In 2022:

- 84% of campers said they learned something new at Camp;
- 84% said that they could be themselves at Camp; and
- 87% of campers reported they belonged at Camp.

There are two keys to our success in helping campers achieve their goals. The first is our size. Hosting an average of 20 to 90 campers per session, we are designed to foster an intentionally intimate camp culture, allowing us to give focused attention to each camper. The second, and most important, is our staff. The best of the best, our team makes Camp special for each camper. If you know of someone who is college aged, we would love a chance to talk to them about working this summer at Camp.

### Thank you for your continued support of Camp Aranzazu!

Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of children and adults with special needs and chronic illnesses. If you haven't done so recently, I would love to give you a tour of Camp and show you how your support is put to work. Reach out to me to set up a time to see the magic for yourself.

Kurt R. Podeszwa  
President/CEO



## FROM CAMPERS

## To Activity Leaders

**“T**here’s magic at Camp Aranzazu. It’s amazing to see that so many boundaries and barriers are taken down for every single person who goes to Camp. From campers to staff, you’re going to push yourself mentally. You’re going to feel like you belong; you’re going to find people who love and support you. You’re going to get whatever you need and have a chance to grow and be yourself,” shares Alexis. At 13, Alexis pushed her twin brother, Arnold, to join her at Camp Aranzazu for Driscoll Children’s Hospital Camp TLC (Teens Living with Cancer). As young teens, they were both nervous to be away from home for the first time and staying in a cabin with people they didn’t know.

After a week at Camp Aranzazu, they both left changed. Alexis was able to focus on her mental health and share her feelings with other Driscoll patients who were also undergoing cancer treatment. And for Arnold, he was able to connect with other kids who had siblings battling cancer and understand that he wasn’t alone in his feelings.

**“It wasn’t just me dealing with cancer. Cancer affected all of us as a family. And it was special to find a safe place away from home full of so much profound healing,”** says Alexis.

Alexis and Arnold were eager to return to Camp Aranzazu as activity leaders in 2021. They were both excited to use their experiences as campers to help others grow, find a community, and achieve their own goals. Says Arnold, “We want campers to have fun and know that people like us are there to help them.

We want to give them the best week of their lives.” Alexis added, “After feeling the connection and encouragement from the Camp Aranzazu staff when we were campers, we knew we wanted to be that for someone else. I wanted to extend that same love and support to our campers. Help them express themselves and figure out who they are – that’s what Camp Aranzazu did for me.”

Ready to start your own transformational summer? Visit <https://camparanzazu.org/careers> to apply today!



# STAY Stellar!



In preparation for a new year of camps, our team creates a theme for our camp shirts. This theme does more than inspire the look of these shirts and inform programming – it also serves as our mantra for the year. Whether it be “Unlimited Horizons,” “Building Bridges,” or “Be Curious” – each of these themes gives us the opportunity to highlight a beloved value at Camp Aranzazu.

“I feel like I belong.”



Our team is excited to announce the 2023 camp theme...STAY STELLAR! “Stay Stellar” captures our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for our campers to shine. Though our staff loves to see our campers tackle new challenges and find ways to grow at Camp Aranzazu, it’s equally as important for us to celebrate campers just as they are. Everyone deserves to feel that they belong and are valued and celebrated for who they are in that moment. And this feeling of acceptance allows campers to build confidence in their own abilities and find the strength to take on new opportunities (especially at Camp!).



“I can face my fears.”

More than ever before, we want our campers to know and be rooted in the fact that they are starlike. “Stay Stellar” is more than an opportunity to design a fun shirt. It is our wish that every single camper feels that they belong and are celebrated for everything that makes them unique – a feeling that will far outlast their time at Camp Aranzazu. We can’t wait to see our campers Stay Stellar this year!



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



A partner for more than 10 years, Frost Bank has supported our mission by providing the funds necessary to underwrite the cost of camp and sending volunteers to help run our special events. When asked why Frost Bank continues to support Camp Aranzazu, the team explained that “giving back to our communities has been part of Frost’s philosophy ever since our company was founded more than 150 years ago. Supporting the camp and its mission with funding and volunteers is one way Frost shows its commitment to the community, and it’s a lot of fun too. Our volunteers really enjoy working at the events.”

As volunteers, Frost Bank employees do it all! At both our Houston and Rockport events, Frost volunteers help us create a fun experience from the moment our guests arrive with their quick and efficient

check-in. Volunteers have also used their customer services skills and enthusiasm to assist with raffle tickets, silent auction items, and wine pulls. Their volunteerism allows us to raise nearly \$400,000 each year.

Traci McLester Arellano, Senior Vice President of Public Finance at Frost Bank, shares, “As a member of the Executive and Development Committees, I am truly honored to be able to support Camp Aranzazu in providing a positive, nurturing environment for our campers to thrive. As a native of Rockport-Fulton, I could not be more proud to have this gem in our community.” Thank you, Frost Bank, for donating your money, skills, and time to further our mission and give a one-of-a-kind camping experience to hundreds of campers across Texas!

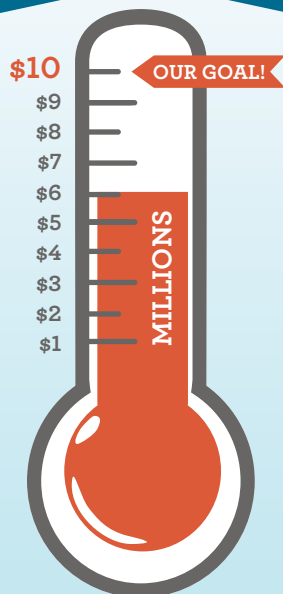


“I learned to not think down on myself and to be brave.”





## RESILIENCY FUND UPDATE



**WE'VE RAISED  
\$6,064,000 AS OF  
3/31/2023!**

## \$6 MILLION DOWN • \$4 MILLION TO GO!

**T**hanks to the generous support of approximately 100 friends of Camp Aranzazu, we met the terms of a \$2.5 million matching gift challenge and now have raised more than \$6 million for the *Camp Aranzazu Resiliency Fund*, our permanent endowment.

"It has been very gratifying to see how many people were truly interested in making sure we raised that \$2.5 million and received 100% of the matching funds," says Virginia Ballard, executive director of the Camp Aranzazu Foundation. "It made the accomplishment that much more fun." "We started Phase II on January 1st," she adds, "and our goal is to reach \$10 million. When the endowment is fully funded, it will provide approximately \$450,000 annually to support the camp's two highest funding priorities—maintaining our 105-acre facility and underwriting much of the cost of camp so that as many children and adults as possible can attend."

The camp's operating budget is always very tight. The *Resiliency Fund* will help ensure that we can

continue to provide our unique form of therapeutic recreation and to maintain our 105-acre, 175-bed facility for generations to come.

Gifts of all sizes are greatly appreciated. In addition to cash, donors can contribute stock or make a gift from a donor advised fund. To learn more, please contact Virginia at (713) 208-0072 or [vballard@camparanzazu.org](mailto:vballard@camparanzazu.org). Visit [www.camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund](http://www.camparanzazu.org/resiliency-fund) for a complete list of contributors.

**"I can connect with other people and make new friends."**





**SAVE THE DATE!**



# ZAZU

14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

**MUSIC and MORE**

SPRING AND TOMMY TAYLOR, *Event Chairs*

**SATURDAY | APRIL 15, 2023**

**5 - 10 PM**

Camp Aranzazu | Rockport, TX

**ZACK WALTHER MATT BRIGGS** *and the* **TEXAS JAMM BAND**



A FREE,  
family-friendly  
Halloween  
celebration!

**SATURDAY | OCTOBER 28, 2023 | CAMP ARANZAZU**



## SAN ANTONIO HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

Wednesday & Thursday  
NOVEMBER 15-16, 2023

The Argyle | San Antonio Gun Club



## HOUSTON HOLIDAY BELLS & SHELLS

TUESDAY | DECEMBER 5, 2023

Greater Houston Sports Club



### 2023 Board of Directors

Keith Little, *Chairman*  
Fields Alexander, *Vice-Chair*  
Daryl Allen  
Mary Margaret Ara, M.D.  
Traci McLester Arellano  
Sara A. Baldwin, Ph.D., RN, APHN-BC  
Casey Cullen  
John C. Elkins  
Blake Finger  
Kathie Forney  
Tom Forney, *Founder*  
John Guill  
Bobby Hatcher, *Treasurer*  
Hunter Hawkins  
Denise Hazen  
Marks Moore  
Bryan Phillips, *Secretary*  
Joanne Taylor  
Greg Watson

### Advisory Board

Katie Brass  
Tom Flaherty  
Robin Floyd  
Shannon Gunn  
Gloria Hicks  
Chip Jenkins  
Mark Kelly  
Jack Kins  
Rob McClane  
Alison Leland McKinney  
Jeff Panknin  
Katherine Smelko  
Ashley Rhodes Smith  
George Strickhausen IV  
Linda Strickland  
Ronarose Train  
Shannon Turner  
John Watson

### President/CEO

Kurt R. Podeszwa

To volunteer at our events, please contact  
BIANCA HERNANDEZ at [bianca@camparanzazu.org](mailto:bianca@camparanzazu.org).

To learn about sponsorships, please contact  
KATE PLOUVIER at [kate@camparanzazu.org](mailto:kate@camparanzazu.org).