

Magic Ginger Ale & Animal Crackers – Reminiscences of Longtime College Settlement Camp Nurse as 100th Anniversary Begins

HORSHAM, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, February 16, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Founded in 1922 to serve the children of Philadelphia and their families by providing a healthy outdoor, country experience in the aftermath of the 1918 Spanish Flu, the mission of [College Settlement](#) and the College Settlement Camps is more vital than ever as the Philadelphia region copes with the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Nancy Crissman, a licensed practical nurse, her first encounters with College Settlement's camp programs were as a neighbor and friend. Nancy and her late husband, John, lived next door to Spruce Run Outpost, College Settlement's property in Millville, PA.



College Settlement celebrates the 100th anniversary of their summer camp programs in 2022.

"My husband and I had bought a farm that was next to the College Settlement camp in Spruce Run, and we began to see some of the buses and cars coming up the road, and they weren't sure they were headed in the right direction to get to the camp," said Crissman.

"John and I worked with the kids and the camp, and it was a lot of fun for all of us. Sometimes the kids would swim in our pond. John loved the kids, and he'd sit out on our deck, and we knew when the last bus was leaving to take the kids back at the end of the summer and they go down the road, waving and yelling goodbye, he'd come back into our house and say, well, summer's over now," recalled Crissman.

"I'm attached to College Settlement in many ways. In 2013, the woman who was the camp nurse in Horsham was retiring, she wasn't going to be able to be at camp the first two weeks. College Settlement had hired someone that was supposed to take her place but at the last minute, that person bailed. And Karyn (Bonner, the camp director) called, and asked if I could help out.

"I said, Karyn, I've never worked as a camp nurse. She said, I don't care. You're a nurse. You can do this. We're really stuck. That's how I ended up there as the camp nurse," Crissman said. "In that first year, I worked two weeks or three weeks. After that I worked every summer for all eight weeks of camp."



College Settlement's long-time camp nurse, Nancy Crissman, at left during 2019 summer camp.

Over the course of her experiences with College Settlement, including the time as a good neighbor to the campers at Spruce Run as well as the camp nurse since 2013, Crissman has had many memorable interactions and happy memories.

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Nancy Crissman

“One of one of the things that stands out in my mind is that my husband, our son David, and I learned to appreciate what we had through the eyes of those children. We looked at it a totally different way, because of what we saw from the kids,” said Crissman. “We saw things that we took for granted that these kids were absolutely amazed by.”

Crissman’s reminiscences always come back to the kids she encountered at College Settlement over the years.

“It’s a wonderful experience for these kids, seeing the young ones come in, see their progress through the camp. The majority of the kids that come in their first year, even though it might be rough, they have some homesickness because they’ve never been away from home. It’s totally in the country, you think you’re in the middle of the woods. That’s scary to kids, especially the eight-year-olds. Homesickness is a big thing. But if you can get them over that, and we do that with animal crackers, and magic ginger ale. It works fantastic, fixes everything”

As she relates a recent experience from the summer of 2021, Crissman notes that there were times where she used this “method” over the phone.

“Last summer, they had this little guy, first year at camp, and nothing was working. He wanted to go home. Karyn was more or less babysitting with him because he wouldn't do anything, he was crying. She called me, and she said do you want to talk to him? He talked to me, a very polite young man, an eight year old, first time away from home and he missed his mom. I said you could have so much fun at camp. You'll have so many things to tell her about. She'll be so proud of you. He said, well, I don't know. I said tell you what. I have a magic cure. I want you to go into the nurse and you tell her that nurse Nancy sent you. Ask her if she would please give you some animal crackers and magic ginger ale. I promise you're going to feel so much better, you're going to have such a good time at camp, your mom's going to be so proud of you. He went into the nurse, she gave him the animal crackers and ginger ale. He managed to stay for the whole session and had a really good time. Something as simple as that,” Crissman recalled.

“When you see the influence that the camp has on these children, and the fact that we've watched them grow up from the time they first came to camp,” said Crissman. “When you talk to the parents, they say that their child comes back from camp much more independent, willing to make their bed, willing to help more around the house.”

Crissman noted that the fields, the trails, the woods and the exposure to nature are what give College Settlement a healthy environment in which to give children access to so many things they wouldn't normally experience.

“When the women from College Settlement started the camp 100 years ago, it was because they felt that the children in Philadelphia had no idea what the rest of the world was like other than a few blocks that they lived on,” Crissman said. “They're still learning, even though they have all these different devices, and they have the TVs and the internet and all that kind of stuff, hands on is totally different than checking it out online. And that's why College Settlement is just such a wonderful camp.”

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