



Camp HOPE America®
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ALLIANCE for
HOPE

verizon[✓] Pathways to HOPE Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HopeLine® from Verizon Announces \$500,000 Grant to Alliance for HOPE International for Camp HOPE America Program

San Diego, CA – HopeLine® from Verizon today announced a \$500,000 grant to support Camp HOPE America, the first camping and mentoring initiative in the United States to focus exclusively on children exposed to domestic violence. Camp HOPE America grew out of the vision and work of former San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn, the nationally recognized San Diego Family Justice Center, and Alliance for HOPE International, the umbrella organization for all Family Justice Centers in the country (www.allianceforhope.com). Verizon has supported Family Justice Centers in more than 30 states for nearly a decade. Initially, Camp HOPE was a program of the San Diego Family Justice Center and focused only on children and teens in San Diego. Today, the vision for Camp HOPE is to break the generational cycle of family violence by offering healing and hope to children and teens who have witnessed family violence across the United States. Karianne Johansen, the Director of Camp HOPE America puts it this way: “Through Camp HOPE, we create a unique experience for children and teens that helps give kids their childhood back and shows them that their future can be better than their past.”

Lisbet Perez, a domestic violence survivor from San Diego, praised the investment from Verizon: *“I found hope when I came forward for help at the San Diego Family Justice Center. My children found hope when they experienced the power, healing, and sheer joy of Camp HOPE. They came back from camp different children – children able to care about others and children who believe again in their dreams.”*

Through HopeLine, Verizon is supporting the expansion of the current Camp HOPE program to communities across the United States by providing guidelines for any of the nearly 90 Family Justice Centers to use to run a summer camp. Additionally, for children in San Diego and Imperial counties, the funding will support the extension of the Camp HOPE program into the “Pathways for HOPE” project, a year-round camping and mentoring initiative. The comprehensive program will include a high adventure camping week in the summer for every child or teen, and continue with monthly Hope Circle meetings that focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) activities and include the active participation of adult mentors and teen counselors throughout the year. The goal of the “Pathways for HOPE” project is to use ongoing intervention to break the cycle of domestic violence in these families and provide a pathway to hope for children,

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which will be assessed through quantitative metrics managed by the University of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma's research has already found Camp HOPE to be a powerful change agent in the lives of children impacted by domestic violence. The new "Pathways to HOPE" project seeks to further enhance the power of hope in the lives of trauma-exposed children.

Yesenia Aceves, the Director of the Pathways to HOPE Project being funded by Verizon, said, "Verizon's investment will change the destinies of hundreds of children this next year and as we expand Camp HOPE across America in the years to come, Verizon's support will impact thousands of traumatized children." Casey Gwinn, the founder of Camp HOPE America, said: "Most of the adults we lock up in this country for ALL crimes came out of homes with some mix of child abuse, domestic violence, and/or drugs and alcohol. We can love these children at 11,12, or 14 and change their destinies, or lock them up at 17, 18, or 21 and say we are tough on crime. Camp HOPE is a powerful, effective way to love these children before the trauma they have experienced destroys their futures."

It is well documented that children exposed to domestic violence and related physical and sexual abuse suffer severe and long-term impacts. The majority of all juvenile and adult offenders in correctional institutions came from families of origin with histories of domestic violence, child abuse, and some mix of alcohol and drug abuse. (Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas,2013; Gwinn, 2015). The prevalence of gang membership, teen relationship violence, bullying, and sexual assault have all been associated with children growing up in violent and abusive homes. (Fox, Ruffino, & Kercher,2013).

"Verizon has been committed to domestic violence prevention and awareness since we formed in 2000 and it is important that we drive the mission to break the generational cycle by supporting organizations that focus on teens and children," said Carrie Hughes, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for Verizon. "Camp HOPE has the power to change the outcome for children exposed to family violence and we are excited to partner with them on this initiative."

The University of Oklahoma has been evaluating Camp HOPE for the past two years and Dr. Chan Hellman, in his published findings has written, "Camp HOPE exists to provide children hope, as well as a reprieve from the family violence they experience. The violence they experience on a daily basis leaves them at a greater risk for such things as poverty, substance abuse, crime, lower educational attainment, intimate partner violence, and child abuse. While participating in the activities at Camp HOPE America, the children and their camp counselors establish goals that are believed to enhance optimum functioning of the child given their psychological, social, and demographic means. The results of this outcome assessment indicate that Camp HOPE America does, indeed, provide a pathway of hope for children who experience family violence."

Learn more at www.camphopeamerica.org. Camp HOPE children are available for interviews and footage of Camp HOPE is also available for media outlets. The University of Oklahoma's Evaluation of Camp HOPE 2015 is available upon request.