



hand in hand with families

“They said hello and that was it. They’ve been best friends ever since.”
 — Dawn Wallin

A new door

Picture a camp for families in the Foothills. Two families are bunking in adjoining rooms and through a tiny hole in the dividing wall, two little girls, aged four and five, are whispering to each other—all night long.

“They were inseparable from the first minute,” says Maddison’s mother Margaret Taylor.

“They said hello and that was it,” says Ryane’s mother Dawn Wallin, recalling the first time the girls met in the parking lot at KCCFA Family Camp. “They’ve been best friends ever since.”

Two average kids from two average families except Maddison was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and her little friend Ryane, with Wilms tumour.

That first meeting at camp opened a new door for the two families, isolated by childhood cancer. It opened onto family dinners and barbecues, ballet classes for the girls and a trip to Disney World together. These families have seen each other through some of life’s biggest transitions.

At the time of diagnoses, both families were working flat out, building their careers and providing for their children. But cancer changed

that. Careers were cut off, lifestyles turned upside down.

Dawn left her career as a marketing professional and the family now lives on Robb’s salary as a firefighter and the money he makes as a carpenter. Margaret and her husband Rob created a more flexible model for their downtown marketing company, allowing them to work from their home studio more often.

“It was very hard,” says Margaret. “We were alone for three years. We barely went to any family outings because we were afraid Maddie would catch something. Now we have this incredible friendship and amazing community through KCCFA.”

Sensing the two families were entering a new phase, Rob named their new company NewDoor Marketing. And so, the Wallin-Netherys and Taylor-Lees opened a new door, a new chapter, in their lives.

“I feel like we’ve been given a gift,” says Dawn. “I would never wish cancer on anyone but if I look at our life after Ryane’s cancer and see what we are left with, it is a gift. Cancer helps you to cut away what isn’t essential and leaves you with something much more real. Now I get the life I want with time for Ryane and the things we love.”

Opposite right: L-R Maddison and Ryane met at KCCFA Family Camp and have been best friends ever since. Their blossoming friendship has been a source of strength and comfort for their families.

