

# The Post and Courier

## Survivor remembers Happy Days

By [Ken Burger](#)

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Daniel Martin stepped to the lectern, tugged at his tie, then proceeded to tell his story to members of the Mount Pleasant Kiwanis Club.

Martin is a 19-year-old cancer survivor and proud alumnus of Camp Happy Days, a local program that caters to kids with cancer.

His saga began early, when he was diagnosed at age 2. The next three years of his life were a carousel of treatments and hospital visits. Fortunately, he was too young to remember the worst of it.

The best part, he said, was going to Camp Happy Days when he was 4. He's been going every year since, serving these days as a junior counselor helping other kids through the roughest years of their young lives.

"It's a chance for kids to get away from cancer and hospitals," said Martin, now a sophomore at Charleston Southern University majoring in biology. "I fell in love with it. It's a bonding experience and a way for us to help each other."

### The message

Martin admitted to being nervous about speaking publicly for the first time but felt his message was important.



Daniel Martin

"Camp Happy Days is a loving place where kids get to be kids instead of patients," he said. "I see myself as an example for other kids. They can look at me and see somebody who survived cancer, played high school sports and went on to college. It shows them there's a possibility to be normal."

For 27 years, Camp Happy Days has provided a special experience for kids with cancer by treating them to a week of summer camp.

Every July, more than 150 kids convene at Camp Bob Cooper on Lake Moultrie for a week when they aren't the only ones without hair, or missing a leg or arm due to cancer.

It also gives their parents a week off from the pressures that come with caring for kids caught in the struggle at such a young age.

### **The price**

But no good deed comes without a price tag.

Camp is only one of many events supported by Camp Happy Days. Others include a holiday reunion and a trip to Disney World. Unfortunately, the Disney trip fell victim to the economy and summer camp is fighting an uphill financial battle.

"We're in deep trouble," said Alix Robinson Tew, the camp's director of development. "We're almost at the end of our reserves but the camp will go on, somehow."

To help, call 843-571-4336 or visit [www.camphappydays.com](http://www.camphappydays.com).

"This camp has a special place in my heart," Martin said in closing. "A lot of kids miss so many things due to their illnesses. Camp Happy Days teaches them how to be kids again."

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