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Thank you to the **Western Canadian Children's Heart Network** and the **Mending Little Hearts Fund of Saskatchewan** for supporting this project!

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The Origins of CHAMPS – Supporting Children With CHD

The Children's Healthy-Heart Activity Monitoring Program in Saskatchewan (also known as CHAMPS) began as a vision from heart mom Lynne Telfer (RN), who saw a need for more support for children with congenital or acquired heart disease. Through her work as a nurse she was aware of the extensive cardiac rehabilitation programs for adults, but when looking for similar support for her son she realized that resources were limited and/or non-existent for children with CHD.

Lynne met Juanita Praksas, another heart mom, and together they approached researchers from the College of Kinesiology and College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as the Department of Psychology at the University of Regina to help bridge the gap in care. Alongside Pediatric Cardiology doctors & nurse clinicians at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan) and other patient family advocates, CHAMPS Camp was developed.

In 2015, the first CHAMPS summer day camp was held at the University of Saskatchewan. Since then, positive feedback and continued support from heart families has contributed to the success and growth of CHAMPS camp. Below is an overview of the program progression in Saskatchewan:



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The Purpose of CHAMPS

CHAMPS Camp stemmed from a need and desire to provide children with heart conditions the resources they deserve to be able to THRIVE! We have developed **three main pillars** that guide this mission and our programming:

1. Physical activity promotion and participation
2. Heart health & heart health behaviour promotion
3. Psychological well-being

As our program continues to expand, it is essential to maintain our **core values.** These values ensure that children and their families are provided optimal services at CHAMPS. When starting your own CHAMPS camp, we hope you keep these in mind and champion your group to:

1. Ensure every camper feels safe
2. Ensure every camper feels included
3. Empowering campers to meet their full potential & THRIVE
4. Being “all in” for our campers & their family members

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Overview of our Saskatchewan Team

Your main contact will be **Dana Lahti**, current Camp Coordinator in Saskatchewan. Please contact her with any questions, comments or concerns.

Email: dana.lahti@usask.ca

Phone: (306) 371-8833

For a full list of our Saskatchewan team members, visit our website:

https://mendinglittlehearts.ca/our-team/

Clinic Team at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital

Dr. Charissa Pockett, Pediatric Cardiologist (Head of Pediatric Cardiology, JPCH)

Dr. Scott Pharis, Pediatric Cardiologist

Dr. Tim Bradley, Pediatric Cardiologist

Marie Penner, Registered Nurse

Angela Wiens, Registered Nurse

Research Team

University of Saskatchewan:

Dr. Marta Erlandson, Associate Professor, College of Kinesiology

Dr. Corey Tomczak, Associate Professor, College of Kinesiology

Dr. Charissa Pockett, Assistant Professor, College of Medicine

Dr. Scott Pharis, Assistant Professor, College of Medicine

Dr. Tim Bradley, Clinical Associate, College of Medicine

University of Regina:

Dr. Kristi Wright, Professor, Department of Psychology, Registered Doctoral Psychologist

Mending Little Hearts Fund Team

Lynne Telfer – Registered Nurse, heart mom, patient family advocate

Juanita Praksas – Registered Nurse, heart mom, patient family advocate

Anna Maton – Heart mom, volunteer fundraiser, patient family advocate

Dana Lahti – Clinical Exercise Physiologist, CHAMPS Camp coordinator

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A One-of-a-Kind Experience

To our knowledge, CHAMPS camp is a one of a kind program in North America. Our day camp style approach provides an environment where children and their families have opportunities to participate in sessions both independently and together. Our model also provides a feasible way for families to access programming all year round.

Now in our 7th year, we have seen the positive impact of this model. Children have more confidence, autonomy, and are able to realize their full potential outside of camp. Parents/Guardians feel better equipped to “let go”, and feel a sense of relief knowing their child has the tools to manage their condition independently.

CHAMPS Camp is unique in that we have a research program to provide the most relevant, evidence-based programming for heart kids. Our research areas include: body composition, cardiovascular physiology, exercise capacity, exercise prescription, mental wellness, nutrition, physical literacy, psychology and growth & development.

> **NOTE: It is **not** a requirement to include research if you are setting up a CHAMPS program in your area. Children are **not** required to participate in research to attend camp. You will have access to all previous & current research, outcomes and content in this guide.*

Learn more about our research initiatives:

CHAMPS Program & Research Overview

Improving the Outlook for Children with Congenital Heart Disease

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Why is CHAMPS Camp Special?

The best way to get a sense for our program is through our campers and their families. Below are various resources that capture the essence of CHAMPS Camp.

CHAMPS Camp Promotional Video

Saskatchewan Heart Hero Stories

Check out some of our most recent media features:

CHAMPS Camp returns to USask (July 12, 2022 - U of S College of Kinesiology)

CHAMPS Camp helps kids with heart disease gain the confidence to live without fear (July 12, 2022 - Global Saskatoon)

'I've never met another heart child before': Kids with heart disease find community at Sask. summer camp (July 7, 2022 - CTV Saskatoon)

Visit our website to view pictures from recent camps:

https://mendinglittlehearts.ca/champs-camp/

Testimonials from campers:

"I felt like I could try new things and do activities without worrying about my heart breaking because I was being supervised by people who knew what was wrong with me."

"I liked talking about my feelings and seeing other kids with the same scar as me."

"I really enjoyed being able to connect with old friends and be with others who understand how I feel."

"My least favourite part of the camp was leaving!"

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Testimonials from parents:

"My son now has friends who are just like him - who experience similar challenges and fears. He sees that it is possible to continue to be active as he gets older, after watching the older peer models, and he has benefited from the knowledge of the professionals who gave him valuable information empowering him to make the best decisions for his condition."

"Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity. I can't emphasize enough how impressed I am by the level of organization, the well thought out content, and the overall goal of this program. As a parent, it significantly increased my confidence level in terms of understanding my son's ability."

"[My child] really learned about her own condition and wanted to teach everyone else around us."

"On the second day he said, 'Mom do you know how many kids there are in Saskatoon that have the same problem as I do?' He counted more than 20!"

"Thank you for running such an empowering camp for these amazing kids. The self-confidence my child gained will serve her well in her future interactions."

"The program has been such an amazing help in building confidence, building friendships with children that are the same. It is something we have looked so forward to all year round."

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