Summer Camp for Kids Affected by HIV to Close After This Year

The reason is simple: Few children are born with the virus.

August 27, 2018 By Trent Straube

The sun is setting on Camp Sunrise, the Ohio getaway for children affected by HIV/AIDS. As WYSO 91.3FM reports, this is the last summer that campers will gather for games, friendship and a welcoming escape from the outside world.

Thanks to HIV prevention efforts, mother-to-child HIV transmissions have dropped radically since the camp opened 24 years ago. WYSO notes that fewer than 100 babies were born with the virus in the United States in 2016, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the 68 campers at Camp Sunrise, only seven are living with HIV (the camp caters to those living with and affected by the virus).

What's more, improvements in HIV treatment mean that children living with HIV can now attend summer camps with their HIV-negative peers.

"Back in the mid-1990s we always thought someday Camp Sunrise won't be necessary, and I think that time has finally come," camp director Keiffer Erdmann told WYSO, "although it's hard when it's a pretty powerful, pretty magical week and strong relationships get built."

Many of today's counselors first became involved with Camp Sunrise as campers. Several attended the camp each summer for nearly half of their lives.

"I'm heartbroken," said counselor Summer Gragg, 22, who attended the camp with her now-deceased sister since she was a little girl. "Oh my gosh. It's very tough. It's really heartbreaking because this is what I look forward to every year. January will come around, and I'll be like, Only eight more months, eight more months until I see the people I love."

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