
Live like James

Love like James

James Carew's family created postcards with his image and the logo of the foundation and scholarship named in his memory.



Memorial scholarship creates access to children's summer program

by ARLEEN SHEA

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SUMMER AT Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm in Newbury, Massachusetts, is a magical time, an opportunity to play, laugh, and learn. For the “Little Farmers,” the youngest children who attend our summer enrichment programs, this means sun-filled days playing with baby goats, chasing butterflies, singing on hay wagon rides, and making new friends. Many of the children who attend our summer programs return year after year, creating lasting memories and a sense that this beautiful place is an indelible part of their childhood, a place where they grew up. Many continue to return—while home from college during the summer or visiting with friends and family,

eager to share the pleasures that this historic farm gave them as youngsters.

These warm, too-short weeks of summer have been the highlight of my job with Historic New England over the past fifteen years. However, last summer brought the legacy and spirit of one young friend, James Carew, who passed away in 2019 at the age of eight, to fill the season with a sense of joy unparalleled.

James's older brother, Jack, was a summer regular. Each day their mother would arrive to pick up Jack with James in her arms, beaming ear to ear. James navigated this world with hugs and laughter, spreading joy and happiness wherever he went. For the first few years, James

was too little to join his brother; later, his physical limitations made it impossible. We had discussions and thought of scenarios to make James's participation possible, but what he required was a one-to-one aide to assist him with the daily activities at the farm. We simply did not have the capability of safely accommodating a child with special needs. It weighed on me, as a parent, to see his mother searching for ways to offer James what he wanted most of all—a chance to be a kid, with his friends, at this beautiful farm.

In the winter of 2020, the Carew family approached me and expressed their desire to create and fund a scholarship through a legacy foundation named for James that would enable children with



Little Farmers program participant Kaydie Gonzales in the raincoat she wore during one of her favorite activities in the program, feeding mash to Captain the horse.

special needs to attend the *Little Farmers* program in a fully inclusive experience. The family outlined a well-planned pilot program that would offer a week's tuition, along with a one-on-one instructional aide to accompany the child, allowing the child, as they put it, "to be fully included in all the activities in the program." The foundation was already working with a team at the local elementary school that consisted of an occupational therapist, speech therapist, and physical therapist as well as the special education teachers. This team would identify children and then award the scholarships. The answer was an immediate yes, and we offered to have one child participate each week for the pilot season.

The success of the program exceeded our expectations. Children who had never been able to attend a summer camp anywhere locally were able to have a totally inclusive,

safe, and fun experience. One of the scholarship recipients, Kaydie Gonzales, still carries with her a little figurine that looks like Captain, our resident equine. She loved to watch Captain eat his breakfast—a soupy alfalfa and grain mash that he happily slobbers on anyone who gets too close to the fence. Kaydie determined that while wearing her rain jacket it was great fun to be covered with gooey blobs of the mash. She wore that jacket every day to be closer to her new friend.

The animals at the farm, all permanent fosters from the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, seem to understand the needs of children in ways that even other humans do not. Last summer I was reminded, perhaps more than in summers past, of how lovingly all the animals take care of and enjoy time with the children. Pike, one of the barn cats, even let Kaydie hold him,

which is not the usual arrangement he has with small children. All of the children loved the hens in the back poultry house. The hens are small and the staff has worked with them since they were little, so they are very social creatures. The children were fascinated with the spaghetti worms we fed the hens each morning. For Kaydie, this became the ideal opportunity to interact with other children. Watching her giggle as she worked with new friends to feed silly chickens a worm made of pasta is what I will perhaps remember the most about summer 2021. It is a beautiful thing to watch small children and animals accept one another so organically. After a long year of pandemic isolation for all of us, with remote schooling and working from home, it was amazing to witness such an abundance of kindness.

Kaydie's family has already expressed the desire for her to return next summer so that she can be with her friends again. As a teacher, I am looking forward to working with the foundation again next summer, to bring joy to ALL children here at Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm. It is, after all, what James would have wanted. 🐾

Historic New England offers two summer programs at Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm: Little Farmers, for children ages five through eight; and Farm Adventures, for nine to twelve year olds. For more information, visit historicnewengland.org. To learn more about or to donate to the James Carew Foundation, visit JamesCarewFoundation.org.