

community impact |

FROM BROKEN HEARTS to Happy Hearts

By Kim Tarnopolski

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Many of us were fortunate enough to have healthy childhoods. Growing up, our bodies were free of major medical complications. It wasn't until we made the choice to have our own children that we realized just how miraculous the birth of a healthy child truly is.

Congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect and affect about 1% of births per year in the US. Dan and Margaret Majetich suffered the life-altering loss of two children to heart defects. To honor the lives of their only children, the Majetichs created the Nick & Kelly Heart Fund. Dan and Margaret Majetich founded the organization in 1985 after the death of their younger son, Kelly, and they added the name of their remaining child, Nick, after his death in 1992.

The organization seeks to minimize the financial and emotional burden on families and enable children with heart disease to enjoy an active, fulfilling life. One way they do this is through their annual heart camp. 100 kids go to the camp each year along with 50 volunteers comprised of camp counselors, doctors, and



nurses. The camp is held in Prescott and, like most camps, offers an opportunity for the kids to swim, boat, ride horses, create arts and crafts, climb rock walls and much more. The full-time staff of professional and medical volunteers allows the kids the confidence to go and have FUN. Dan shared, "For many of these children, it's the first time they've spent a night away from home."

Ahwatukee residents, Daradee and Ross Murray, experienced a similar loss in 2009 after their son, Liam, died of a congenital heart defect. As fate would have it, the Murrays met the Majetichs by chance at an event and formed a lasting bond. Together, these families continue to raise awareness and funds for families affected by heart defects.

In August, Daradee shared the Nick & Kelly Heart Fund with the members of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun. Her personal story touched the hearts of the women present that evening and the Nick & Kelly Fund was awarded donations totaling \$10,400. This donation will allow several children to attend camp next summer, free of charge. Daradee expressed her gratitude by saying, "The camp is changing lives one heart at a time. This donation is a huge blessing."

Visit www.nickandkellyfund.org and www.100wwevalleyofthesun.org to learn more about these important organizations.

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