



Rebuilding the Lives of Youth Affected by Chronic Illness

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LOCATION

Ballymore Eustace, Ireland: Ballymore is a small town located approximately 45 km southwest of Dublin. The town is situated on the banks of the River Liffey in close proximity to the Wicklow border. As a small town of 900 people, the community was historically supported entirely by a woolen mill. Both Irish and English are the languages of this town, which in addition to maintaining rich Irish heritage, is home of Barretstown, a Serious Fun Camp!

Barretstown Castle



Serious Fun Camp Locations:

- Haiti • Ethiopia • Hungary • Vietnam
- Italy • Israel • Botswana • Japan
- Malawi • Israel • France • Cambodia
- Lesotho • United Kingdom • India
- Tanzania • Uganda • Swaziland
- South Africa • United States • Ireland



GLOBAL FIELD AGENCY

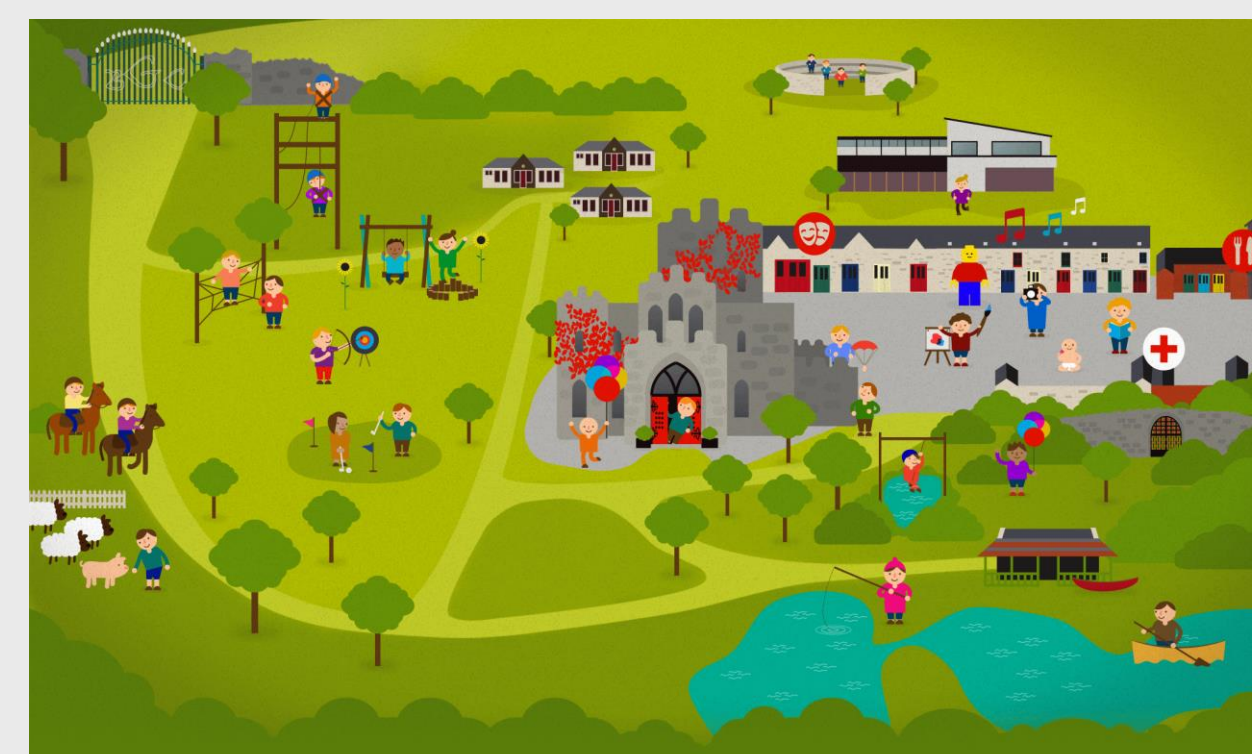
Barretstown: My global field experience was with Barretstown, a Serious Fun Camp, that provides free, specially designed camps and programs for children living with a serious illness. They use a unique model called therapeutic recreation, which is a child-centered approach designed to meet the individual needs of each child/family member. The goal is to ensure that individuals gain, or regain, skills and an understanding of their own abilities, empowering them to make informed choices in other aspects of their lives.

EXPERIENCE

At Barretstown, I worked alongside “caras” (friends), interpreters, and staff members from many different countries to create a fun, safe, and supportive environment for campers.

- **Volunteer Role:** Cara
- **Camp Session:** 9-day teen camp
- **Youth Nationalities:** Germany, Russia, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, UK, US
- **Cottage:** Russian girls
- **Activity Group:** Russian girls & boys

Barretstown Map



CONNECTIONS

Classroom (SW 510):

My SEED Course, Creative Interventions with Children and Youth, furthered my interest in working with children and provided me with a toolbox of different activities and interventions that are useful when working with this population.

Field Placement:

After my global experience at Barretstown, I helped facilitate activities for Camp Sparkle, a summer camp for children impacted by cancer at Gilda’s Club.

Career:

My mission as a social worker is to help children and families live the best possible life when faced with a chronic illness. My dream is to volunteer at all 30 Serious Fun camps in my lifetime.

SKILLS DEVELOPED

My field experience allowed me to further develop the following areas:

- Engagement with youth in a multicultural setting
- Empathetic and active listening pertaining to chronic disease
- Verbal and non-verbal multilingual communication
- Professional, personal reflection on career goals and ambitions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities for financially supporting my Global Independent Study, Shawna Lee for serving as my GIS mentor, and Barretstown for allowing me to be a part of the magical experience they provide to children and families around the world.



Kayaking with my Activity Group

LESSONS LEARNED

- Relationships can be built without sharing a common language.
- It’s okay to let down your barriers and be silly, laugh, smile and have fun.
- Children are extremely resilient.
- Not all chronic illnesses are physically visible.

ADVICE

- Familiarize yourself with the culture of the people that you will be working with: language, colloquial sayings, beliefs, religious background etc.
- Arrive a few days early to get used to your surroundings, especially if you will experience a time change.
- Take the time to have conversations with the locals. They have amazing stories to tell.