

Every year we make a short speech to end Visiting Day, with some words that we hope resonate with all of you, and remind you how fortunate we are to have the most fulfilling career ever—we always say it's not work for us, but a way of life.

But because it's a way of life, our work imparts our every being, and this we year we started camp without one of the most special members of our Manitou family. Some of you may know that we lost one of our closest friends, not just a member of our family, but a best friend who was one of the most loyal, hardest working, compassionate, and caring human beings you will have ever met. In David's case, he started with us in our first year, and he was one of the key people that created that warmth and caring culture that defines Manitou.

Camp is one of the most intense and emotional jobs out there—so how is it possible that our staff and director team, with such mixed emotion, could once again give back so much to others knowing that each day we miss someone who was the heart and soul of Manitou? How is it that camp has once again been one of the best summers ever? It's actually because of the legacy that Dave left us, and because the love and respect our staff had for Dave, it has made it easy for them to do everything in their power to embody his approach in every aspect of their work. Basically, David taught us for these past two decade everything we needed to know and in turn now our staff's greatest gift back to him is to act in the David Sheffe way. Everyone here knows that Dave would have wanted us to make sure this summer would be our very best, and it's clear that his strength, vision, and teachings have allowed his legacy to endure forever; the Manitou family can never be broken—that has clearly been show. But I don't think until now we ever truly realized for ourselves the strength we would garner from our own extended second family.

We didn't know how this summer would play out—but you quickly learn that because we are one united family, with core values that tie us together and shared experiences that are based on what really matters, we are still doing things in the Manitou way. Positive relationships, growth, learning, gratitude, and giving back to those less fortunate is typical for Manitou, and shows how we are all still tied together with a magical bond.

Like many parents, you have probably said to your kids, "Remember, family is everything, When it comes down to it your family are the only people that understand your very being and that share in your upbringing." But you can have different types of families outside of your immediate one. It could mean your closest friends, your sports team, your Synagogue or your Church. It's people who accept you for who you are, people that you can share your inner emotions with, when you are the most vulnerable, and also when you are at your best and laughing so hard your stomach hurts.

I am more convinced than ever that the Manitou family is one of the most life-changing institutions for your children, because everything we do is based on respect, tolerance,

diversity, respect for the individual, and acceptance within a beautiful setting without technology.

At Friday Night Fireside, we conclude with our poem that says “Be yourself, but be your best self. Dare to be different and to follow your own star, and don’t be afraid to be happy. Forget which you have done for your friends, and remember what they have done for you.” This magical Manitou poem that your campers know off by heart is genuine and they value every word.

So once again we want to take this opportunity today to tell you how grateful we are to you for sending your children to our camp, for all your support, and for your beautiful notes and words after hearing of Dave’s passing, and how comforting it was to know how far our family does extend.

We are so proud of our director team who have been consumed with emotion every day, at every turn, and somehow have managed to put the kids first. We are proud of our Unit Heads, Activity Heads, and overall staff team who have had an energy this summer that is beyond the norm, and we know this unparalleled energy and silliness that inspired us is our staff’s way of honouring David, Heather, and his family.

But it is your kids that drive us. Seeing their smiling faces, their thank yous, their creativity, their ability to escape the social media driven pressured world and enjoy the good old-fashioned outdoors, and doing it so seamlessly. Them being silly, and pushing themselves out of their comfort zone, so that their confidence soars. That is what drives us every single day to do the very best job for your children.

Of course, nothing is more important than your own families, but we do hope Manitou can be your second family for your children. Where we take people of all ages, and place them in a support system of love learning. Where everyone is here for each other. Where powerful mentors can be there for your children, so every single child realizes why they deserve to follow their own star and be happy.