



Barretstown Castle, Ballymore Eustace, Co Kildare. W91 RDX6, Ireland.

tel: +353 (0) 45 863 100 **fax:** +353 (0) 45 864 197

email: info@barretstown.org **web:** www.barretstown.org

*To a child fighting cancer, your kind gift
of even €25 to Barretstown today is a
ticket back to joy, laughter, and life.*

*Please could you give that magic to
another family like mine?*



*You never imagine your
child with cancer*

Dear friend to Barretstown,

Autumn, 2025

Childhood cancer goes against everything we grow up believing.

That children should be healthy and strong. That as mams, dads, and grandparents, we'll always be able to shelter our little ones from trauma and pain.

Yet there I was on St. John's Ward in Crumlin Hospital – over a two-hour drive from home – turning my beautiful girl into a pincushion.

"Mammy, I don't want medicine today," came her pleading voice. Sheenagh was three. Terrified of needles, crying from pain. A little child with blood cancer.

My child.

It may feel hard to picture how we were being guided to Barretstown even then, but it's true. Because it was generous hearts like yours that helped give my family a ticket to the joy you all but forget when every day is a war against cancer.

As I share the difference that Barretstown supporters have made in our lives, please would you consider giving €25 or even €50 today, to help another family in Ireland facing a childhood cancer diagnosis have a ticket to Barretstown this autumn?

Leukemia crept into our lives disguised as a tummy ache. Something every

(overleaf, the night I heard)

child has at one time or another. Only this was no ordinary tummy ache.

After a suspected urinary tract infection, after antibiotics – even after her appendix was removed and it seemed Sheenagh was finally flying it – the cancer was hiding, working in her blood and bone marrow, notoriously hard to diagnose.

I'll never forget the call, over family pizza the night before my birthday.

The hospital had run bloods after her appendix surgery. It was eight p.m. when the phone rang. Part of me hoped it was a routine update, even at that hour.

They told me Sheenagh had to come back right away. That night.

Her cells are all the same under the slide, they said. White blood cells called 'blasts' were multiplying out of control, crowding out the others. Leukemia.

All I could think was, "Can't she have just one more night at home?"

In an instant nothing was the same. Sheenagh's two big brothers – Arthur who's now 9, and Tadhg, now 7 – would be without their mam, staying with my own parents. Sheenagh and I were gone for the next ten days.

But I have to tell you.

To this day I'm overwhelmed at the help I could count on. It's the most precious advice I'd share with any family hearing that terrifying cancer diagnosis.

Accept the help that's offered. From trusted friends and neighbours, from family, and from amazing organisations like Barretstown that couldn't exist without caring people here at home who give so selflessly to support the work.

Just welcome that support, because when we were completely exhausted, the magic of Barretstown found us – and the joy of childhood life returned.

Through your heartfelt gift of €25 to help with a ticket to Barretstown today, you can bring that joy to another exhausted family facing serious childhood illness. The joy of time together, laughter, and life.



Sheenagh before leukemia. A smile like sunshine. 😊

(continue on page 3, please)

To be honest with you, it all felt a bit mad. You're thrust into this world of therapy and treatments that make your child really unwell in order to get better.

You face things that you never in a million years could have predicted.

To monitor Sheenagh's bone marrow – the body's new blood cell factory – she had six lumbar punctures over her two-year chemotherapy treatment.

I stopped trying to stay at a hotel the night before hospital visits.

Somehow Sheenagh knew a hotel stay wasn't exciting. It meant more treatments. More needles. She'd cry all night long, afraid of what might be coming.

Her immune system lost its fight. Sheenagh had a runaway infection called sepsis. Weakness from steroids left her afraid to walk for over a month. And a terrifying side effect inflamed the lining of her throat down to her stomach.

At one point she had an IV line for chemotherapy, and a feeding tube through her nose so she could get nutrients. We moved in with my mam and dad, with my sister a total godsend. Sheenagh's dad would take the boys at weekends.



Even in the toughest times, love like yours was on its way. Please help if you can.

Six more children are diagnosed with cancer on average every week in Ireland. Their families facing a similar version of what we did, day after day.

They will need the relief that your gift of a ticket to camp can bring – nearly all of Barretstown's work is possible only thanks to amazing friends like you.

Months passed. Sheenagh's big brothers, Arthur and Tadhg, were doing their absolute best. But when one sibling gets all the attention, it's easy to feel lost.

That first chance to come to a Barretstown Open Day was pure magic.

Here was a place where the boys could just be boys. Here was a place where Sheenagh met little friends like her. Where everyone understood.

When we were invited back for a full weekend, we jumped at the chance.

(overleaf, if we could chat together over tea)

**If we could chat together over a cup of tea, the first thing I'd want to say is
thank you for the magic you'll bring...**

I'd want to share all our camp pictures with you, side by side.

So you can see the kind of memories you'll give to a family like mine – healing, happy memories you'll make possible for every family who comes to camp because you give.



*To a child like my Sheenagh,
you'll give friendship, joy,
and confidence
(with camper Mary-Lou!)*



*To a big brother like our Arthur,
you'll give horse riding, courage,
and smiles...*



*To a sibling like our Tadhg,
you'll give adventure,
new worlds, and trust...*

At Barretstown you can tell there's so much work behind the scenes. The careful way Caras – camp volunteers – are trained. The impeccable, welcoming cottages. The grounds and activities. The 24-hour, expertly staffed Med Shed.

We were so blessed to come for two incredible weekends thanks to friends like you.

That last weekend we shared our cottage with a family whose little boy has a serious illness he will never be better from. He needs a treatment that he can only ever have twice in his life, and they have to wait to get the most out of it.

**And it made me think how magical
generosity like yours really is.**

In giving today, you'll see past the cancer or other serious diagnosis, to the heart of a child – then you'll give them a place where their dreams can be real.

I hope you'll give if you can, for another
waiting child.



*Most of all, to families like mine you'll give
the gift of time and healing... thank you ♥*

(continue on page 5)

The background preparation and support for children with serious illnesses like Sheenagh means that it will take about €450 per day for a child to come to camp at Barretstown this autumn, and around €1,600 to help an entire family come for a weekend.

Choosing to join with other supporters to give what you can – when the government supports only around four percent of everything that happens at Barretstown – makes all the difference.

We could never have been able to come to camp without friends like you.

Please give today if you can, €25, €50, €100 or whatever feels right, to help another child and family have a ticket to Barretstown.

I keep thinking how, because good people like you support this remarkable place at the edge of the Wicklow Mountains, children and families come away forever changed.

It really hit home for me when I saw how easily Sheenagh and the boys made friends and joined in activities.

One boy had a brain tumour, but it didn't even really register with Arthur or Tadhg, because to them he was a mate to bring on all their adventures.

It's a compassion and a way of caring for others that I don't think they would ever have learned anywhere else.

They'll be changed by it for life, and that's down to friends like you, giving to keep every blade of grass, every stone, every tree, every pathway here for children with cancer and other serious illnesses, and here for their families who love them.

I hope now you can see why we call it a magic ticket, this ticket you can give. Even if you help fund just a piece of it today, know that someone else will be doing the same, and together you'll be there for families this autumn.

Accept the kindness that's offered you, that's the advice I'd give to another

(continue overleaf for an update on Sheenagh)



*Your magic ticket can give
childhood back to children like
mine. Thank you ♥*

family just hearing the devastating news that their child has leukemia or any other daunting diagnosis.

I'm so grateful to know you're out there, a friend to Barretstown, and a friend to families like mine through some of the toughest times we'll know.



Thank you so much, with all our hearts – please give this autumn if you can.

Catherine

Catherine Lally

Grateful mam to Arthur, Tadhg, and Sheenagh
(Shown on our first weekend camp at Barretstown – thank you!)

PS. Who could believe that this beautiful little girl, who endured lumbar punctures, chemotherapy sickness, trauma from needles, and countless infections due to leukemia, would stand so proudly before the camera at camp? You can give a child like my Sheenagh this very same gift, a gift we'll never never forget. She'll be monitored for about five years to be sure the cancer doesn't return, and I know I'll feel your kindness with us every day.



Barretstown is one of the worthiest charities I know, and your gift to help fund a magic ticket will make a massive difference to a child's life... and to a family just like mine, who loves them. I hope you'll use the enclosed gift form to give today if you can. Thank you for being the kind of person who believes in bringing childhood back to children with cancer and other serious illnesses.



Barretstown is a SeriousFun Camp. Irish Registered Company No. 194322 Registered Charity No. 20027759 CHY (Revenue) No. 10715
Registered Office: as above **Associated with:** The Barretstown Gang Camp Fund (UK) Ltd., **Reg No.** 3050570 **Charity No.** 1046648

Our commitment to you: We promise to effectively apply your gifts for their intended purpose, to help children affected by serious illness. Barretstown complies with the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public (issued by the Charities Regulator).