myFace Monthly Pulse

August 2026

Small Gifts, Big Change

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August Moments That Matter:

What We Find in One Another



August reminded us that being understood doesn't require having the same story. Across myFace this month, individuals and families brought different experiences, perspectives and journeys into spaces where they could simply be themselves. Children experienced the power of seeing parts of their own lives reflected in others. Adults found recognition in experiences they rarely have the opportunity to share. Families who arrived wondering whether they would fit in left already thinking about when they could come back.

From Wonder Academy and the 100 Cleft Portrait Tour to the Adult Retreat, Family Camp and the Brotherhood, August showed us the importance of creating opportunities for people to bring their own perspectives and lived experiences forward, express what matters to them and know that their voices are genuinely heard and valued.

There can be something powerful in recognizing a piece of yourself in someone else, a child seeing new possibilities, a parent realizing another family understands, or someone sharing an experience and finding recognition in the room.

That is what stood out this August. When people have the space to show up as their whole selves, contribute their own perspectives and know that who they are and what they have to say matters, we create something far more powerful than simply bringing people together. We create spaces where people feel seen, heard and valued.













July 31 - August 2, 2026

Come As You Are, Leave Stronger Together | myFace Adult Retreat

Twenty-two adults with facial differences gathered at Overlook Lodge at Bear Mountain Inn for a weekend designed around something participants consistently tell us they need: time and space to be with people who understand their experiences.

Through conversations about self-compassion, relationships, trauma and personal growth, along with art, yoga, hiking, dancing and plenty of time simply being together, the retreat offered a rare opportunity to show up exactly as you are. Some of the most memorable moments weren't on the agenda at all. Participants stayed up talking into the early morning hours, laughed and danced together, shared stories and formed friendships that made it hard to say goodnight.

That spirit carried throughout the weekend. Two returning participants who had barely known one another after the previous retreat became close friends and roommates. When a participant, who is blind, needed assistance navigating the property, fellow participants naturally stepped in to guide them. During an art workshop, participants helped one another with their projects and shared the stories behind personal objects they had chosen to represent themselves.

Most importantly, participants told us what the experience meant to them. One described being among others with similar experiences as "a great boost to my self-esteem," adding that the craniofacial community needs opportunities to be reminded that they are not alone. Another shared that the retreat provided a place to feel "seen, safe and valued," while conversations about medical and social trauma offered perspectives participants could carry into their own lives.

For some, the weekend created something even bigger. One participant arrived knowing almost no one and left knowing many. Another described finding "a real sense of purpose" and "a second family," adding, "It helped me to understand just how much I belong."

Those voices capture why the Adult Retreat exists. It's a weekend to talk about the things that matter, laugh until late at night, try something new, reconnect with familiar faces and meet people who may quickly feel like old friends, all without having to explain the experience of living with a facial difference. As one participant put it, "Everyone should have the opportunity to attend a retreat, be among peers, feel supported and connected." And after a weekend like this one, it's easy to understand why participants are already looking forward to the next.

myFace on the 100 Cleft Portrait Tour





August 6-8, 2026

Winston-Salem, North Carolina & Atlanta, Georgia | myFace Representative: Justin Stewart

Across the Winston-Salem and Atlanta tour stops, connections with families, healthcare providers, advocates and community partners created valuable opportunities to share myFace programs and resources while strengthening relationships throughout the cleft and craniofacial community.

In Winston-Salem, Justin connected with partners from Atrium Health Levine Children's Brenner Children's Hospital, the NC Cleft and Craniofacial Center, UNC Adams School of Dentistry Craniofacial Center and the Face to Face Foundation. These conversations helped strengthen relationships with professionals deeply connected to the community while introducing more families to myFace programs, support and upcoming camp opportunities.

Connections continued in Atlanta with families and the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta cleft and craniofacial team. A particularly meaningful moment came when Justin met 5-year-old Lizzie, who has a cleft, and the two became pen pals. Their connection was a powerful reminder of what these tour stops make possible, creating meaningful relationships within the community while opening doors for myFace to build new partnerships, expand its reach and connect more individuals and families with support, resources and one another.





August 11-12, 2026

Orlando, Florida | myFace Representative: Dan Elston

The Orlando tour stop brought together families, medical students and members of the Nemours Children's Hospital team, creating opportunities to share myFace programs and resources while connecting with the local cleft and craniofacial community.

Artist Katie shared the personal inspiration behind her portraits, her daughter and others with craniofacial differences who too rarely see themselves positively represented in art. The following morning, she addressed physicians and multidisciplinary staff during Grand Rounds, sharing her perspective as a parent and prompting thoughtful conversations about language, perception and the different perspectives of patients, families and medical providers.

Dan's time in Orlando provided an important opportunity to build relationships with families and healthcare professionals while supporting the tour's larger message of positive representation and lived experience. The experience highlighted the value of bringing these perspectives into healthcare spaces, creating opportunities for deeper understanding and more thoughtful dialogue about how individuals and families experience care.

myFace on the 100 Cleft Portrait Tour





August 18, 2026

Chicago, Illinois | myFace Representative: Rena Rosen

Nearly five months of planning and relationship-building came together for the Chicago stop, with myFace helping bring the tour to the Bernard Weinger JCC in Northbrook and Lurie Children's Hospital. Working alongside JCC Chicago, ACPA, the Lurie team and tour organizers, Rena Rosen helped create opportunities for nearly 70 community members to experience the portraits and connect with one another.

Throughout the day, meaningful moments unfolded. Families who had previously participated in myFace programs returned for the exhibit, while newer community members discovered additional opportunities to become involved. Marla, who had joined myFace just days earlier for Wonder Academy, was particularly moved by seeing the stories of people with clefts represented through the portraits. For other families, the experience became even more meaningful as they found portraits of their own children among the collection.

Beyond the exhibit, important partnerships continued to grow. Rena connected with ACPA and local partners about myFace's expanding work in Chicago, elevating lived experience and creating continued opportunities for support across the lifespan. One family who attended learned about and joined myFace's family camp at Camp Chi a tangible example of how outreach can lead to deeper engagement.

Ultimately, collaboration across organizations created a space where individuals and families could see their experiences reflected, share meaningful moments together and experience firsthand the power of representation and belonging.



August 8, 2026

Building New Community Connections in Atlanta

While in Atlanta, Justin Stewart met with Gregory Hill, Executive Director of The Empty Stocking Fund, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that supports children and families in need by providing essential school supplies and other resources that help children thrive.

Their conversation explored opportunities for myFace and The Empty Stocking Fund to work together in the future, including potential volunteer opportunities for the myFace team through back-to-school distributions and other community-based initiatives.

The meeting marked an important first step in building a relationship with an organization deeply connected to Atlanta-area families and exploring new ways myFace can strengthen its community partnerships and local impact.







August 13 - 14, 2026

Wonder Academy: Finding the Power in Every Story | New York and Chicagoland

This August marked the launch of the inaugural myFace Wonder Academy, created to prepare community members to bring the Wonder Project's message of kindness, inclusion, empathy and being an upstander to more students and schools.

Selected from 22 applicants, 14 participants came together in New York, Chicagoland and via Zoom for two days of storytelling, learning and practice. They worked on shaping their personal stories for the classroom, engaging students across different ages and using lived experience to help young people think differently about facial differences and how they treat one another.

But the most meaningful outcome was something we hadn't fully anticipated. For some participants, Wonder Academy was their first introduction to myFace, and their first opportunity to spend meaningful time with others who understood parts of their experience without needing an explanation. Their backgrounds and stories were different, yet there was recognition in the experiences they shared. As participants listened to one another, they found both what connected them and what made each story uniquely their own.

One participant shared, *"It felt good to be in the room with others who understood or have an understanding of my journey."* Another captured the experience simply: *"All of us in this group were similar yet we all have our own story and our own perspective."* What began as training to help participants share their stories with students also became a space where their own stories were heard, valued and understood.

As the cohort moves into mentoring, practice and observation, they will continue developing as Wonder Presenters, but they also leave with something more: new relationships, a greater sense of what their voices can offer, and the knowledge that lived experience can create understanding both inside the classroom and among one another.

August 26, 2027

Brotherhood at the Table: Building What Comes Next



The myFace Brotherhood gathered at Dallas BBQ for an evening of good food, plenty of laughs and time together. Beyond catching up, the dinner gave members an opportunity to share what they want from the Brotherhood and help shape where the program goes next.

The group exchanged ideas about reaching more men with facial differences and creating experiences that keep members engaged both in and outside of organized events. Conversation also turned to what's ahead, including Races for Faces, the upcoming equine program and the Brotherhood Fantasy Football League.

Most importantly, the evening reflected what the Brotherhood continues to grow into: a place where men can build genuine friendships, support one another, have fun and have a voice in creating the experiences that matter to them.

Special thanks to Steve and Dan for helping bring everyone together and supporting the Brotherhood's continued growth.

myFace Family Camp: Where Families Come Together







August 28 - 30, 2026

Camp Chi Family Weekend | Lake Delton, Wisconsin

Family Camp season officially kicked off at JCC Chicago's Camp Chi, the first of four myFace Family Camp Weekends taking place between August and November. Forty-eight members of the craniofacial community gathered for a weekend created to give the entire family, children, parents and siblings, time away from the everyday and the chance to be around people who understand parts of their experience.

Of the 11 families who attended, nine were experiencing Family Weekend for the first time. Some almost didn't come. Parents wondered if their children were too young, if their family would fit in or if they would find anyone who truly understood. By Sunday, those same families didn't want to leave.

Over the weekend, children swam, rode horses, tried archery and water-skiing and simply got to be kids. Three had undergone recent medical procedures or surgery, but at camp, those experiences didn't define their weekend. Siblings found friendships of their own, parents traded stories and cheered one another up the rock wall, and little ones who arrived clinging to their parents were soon running around hugging new friends.

One parent captured the feeling afterward: *"My heart is so full and I'm so grateful for all the new friendships we have made."* Another special moment came as a father watched his daughter become someone the younger children looked up to, just as she had once looked to others.

Family Camp was created in response to something families have told us matters: having opportunities to spend time with others who understand without having to explain. It gives children the freedom to play alongside peers, parents the chance to exchange experiences, and siblings their own place within the weekend. For families arriving unsure of what to expect, simply discovering "there are other families like ours" can be powerful.

Camp Chi set the tone for the Family Camp season ahead. What began for some with uncertainty ended with new friendships, shared memories and children asking when they could come back.



READY TO EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF CAMP?

Three more Family Camp Weekends are still ahead this fall. Families interested in joining us can learn more and register here: https://www.myface.org/camps/

Community Voices

More Than a Backpack:
Support When It Matters Most





Sometimes one connection can open the door to an entire community. Justin Stewart, Jackie Smith and Dina Zuckerberg first met Kiersten DuPont and her daughter, Charlie, at the 100 Cleft Portraits Tour at CHOP in Philadelphia. That introduction continued when Charlie received a tinyFaces backpack filled with resources to help her family prepare for her upcoming palate surgery.

Kiersten shared that the backpack not only brought a big smile to Charlie's face, but helped their family feel more prepared and supported during a stressful time. Most importantly, their introduction to myFace reminded them that they are not navigating this journey alone.

It's a wonderful example of how a single community connection can grow into meaningful support, resources and a sense of belonging when a family needs it most.

Small Gifts, Big Change

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Races for Faces
myFace

JOIN US FOR RACES FOR FACES

2026

On Sunday, September 27, join the myFace community for Races for Faces, our signature annual fundraiser and celebration, hosted this year by Paige Billiot, with Ariana and Anaira, Molly, Lilian and their families serving as our Grand Marshals. Whether you walk, donate, volunteer or simply enjoy the family-friendly festivities, you'll help support programs and services for individuals and families with craniofacial differences while celebrating the people and families at the heart of myFace.

More than 200 volunteers are already helping make this year's event possible, with tremendous participation from NYU Dental, along with volunteers from Stony Brook Dental, S&P Global and other organizations. We are still welcoming volunteers who would like to join us on race day!

Before race day, be sure to watch two of this year's Races for Faces Grand Marshals, sisters Ariana and Anaira, share their family's story and what the myFace community has meant to them. Their voices are a powerful reminder of why we gather each year, and why Races for Faces is about so much more than crossing a finish line.

🏃 **Register, Volunteer, Donate, or Learn More Here**



🎥 **Watch the Story of One of Our 2026 Grand Marshal Families Here**