



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Aileen Hoffman & Marc Eisenshtat  
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Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore on HALO Talks, NYC HALO Talks, Sunrise Walks. . Welcome Aileen Hoffman. My old friend from summer camp Marc Eisenstadt was a one of my color war teens, a winning team. That is one to talk about their initiatives and how we are going to help get kids into day camp. Welcome to the show.

Aileen Hoffman:

Thank you. Thanks for having us, Pete. So when we spoke last

Pete Moore:

Week, we said we got to get on as quick as possible and start to spread the word here. So Ilene, you want to talk about the organization, why you got involved and how the halo industry is going to sunshine and sunrise.

Aileen Hoffman:

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. So like you peed, I'm like thinking about color war campus coming up. For those of us who've gone to sleep away camp. It just becomes part of us, right? It's it's in our blood and I am the vice-president of the national sunrise walks campaign for the sunrise association, which started just 15 years ago. And where our founder at the time found out that there was not one single day camp in the entire world for children with cancer, not one, which is pretty amazing. If you think about it, it's not that long ago. So he just wanted to start a little camp here on long island, which is where our, our headquarters are. And he started with 96 children that first summer. But what he found out before he brought the children up to the camp was that he spoke to parents and parents said, you know, it's nice that you're going to do a camp for children with cancer, but please don't do it unless you include our, include our other children.

Aileen Hoffman:

Because in some ways the other children, the siblings, the brothers and sisters are suffering more than the child with cancer. If you can imagine, if you have your own children, if you have siblings, when, when there's a crisis in a family, everybody's impacted by it. But especially brothers and sisters, because if your brother or sister is sick or in the hospital for a hundred days, which often happens, those little ones or big ones are left behind those grandparents, they're not going to after-school activities. So they said, please do it only if you include our other children. He said, of course. And then the next thing they told

him is we can't afford it for those of us who went to camp, like call your parents, call your grandparents and thank them because camp is expensive. Even non-profit camps and families impacted by pediatric cancer are devastated.

Aileen Hoffman:

Often one parent has to stop working to be home with their sick child. So they said we can't afford it. So Arnie made a pledge back in two, 2006 to never charge one single dollar. Anything that we were going to do again, I said he just wanted to open up like a little pop-up camp fast-forward to now to 2021. We have eight camps we have on long island. The one that I told you that started with 96 children in 2019, we had 880 children registered. We have a camp in Pearl river, New York, Staten island, New York, Atlanta, Baltimore, and aide camps. I'm sorry, in three camps in Israel. And we were supposed to open up a camp on the border of New Jersey and Philly last summer. But due to the pandemic, we had to put a halt on that. We didn't, but we will open that up next summer. So it has been this unbelievable 15 year journey where we have been serving thousands and thousands of children impacted by pediatric cancer.

Pete Moore:

That's amazing. And mark and I went to Camp Laconda up in Glen's Bay, New York, I would say it was one of the shining moments of my life definitely developed my personality, my athletic ability my friend network. So mark, what kind of got you involved originally besides the obvious summer camp experience.

Marc Eisenshtat:

Yeah. Yeah. Peter, appreciate you having us. It didn't help with my athleticism at all. Unfortunately. No, I'm still, I'm still working on that. Yeah. We'll work on that. You know, the networks that you build in camp, the friends that you make, the relationships like, you know, we can connect after all these years and be on the same wavelengths, trying to help people, trying to make people healthier. My situation with sunrise was by happenstance. You know, unfortunately I had a friend whose son was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma and, you know, we were on the phone talking about him, visiting different organizations on long island to volunteer with his family. They had gone, they had gone the family to three different organizations, ended up at sunrise as the fourth. And when they left, they asked the kids what they thought about sunrise. And they were in love with it, you know, young kids that were going to sleep away, camp themselves.

Marc Eisenshtat:

Well shortly after their visit to sunrise and falling in love with the organization. Even my, my friend's son was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma and ended up going back as a camper. So I really just got roped in trying to help my friends. You know, they just needed support. They needed their circle around them. And I started going to these events that alien would host these corporate networking events and these these fundraising events. And they were just trying to rally together more people, more networks, deeper, broader networks. And, and that's what, that's what I do for a living. I'm a connector, you know, so I had a huge network and it was so easy. It was like business networking, but for smiles, you know, like I, I quickly fell in love with what this camp was all about. I personally had struggled my whole life trying to identify with an organization to be philanthropic towards I, I, you know, I always battled with the, you know, where's the money going and, you know, you know, are they going to cure cancer and all these debates that we have with each other, excuse me, this was this was very easy.

Marc Eisenshtat:

You know, I went to the camp, I saw the camp, I saw the kids running around. I met people like a lean and Arnie who are dedicating their lives to this camp and I fell in love. And, and from there we've been doing some really some really great things together.

Pete Moore:

That's great. So Aileen what is going on at the camp that would be different than going to any other day camp or there doctors or nurses you know, on site or was it basically pretty much the same experience?

Aileen Hoffman:

So I can't wait for you to, for you to come and see it the summer, Pete, because if you walked in and you didn't know that this was a camp for children with cancer, you would say, this is a fantastic, gorgeous, beautiful looks like a super poor profit camp. However, it is a camp for children with cancer and their siblings. So we do have a medical staff. We have a medical team, we have nurses. We have doctors on call. There's so many procedures that most people wouldn't even know, like for instance, which makes it so unique. So we have nurses on staff. We have nursing tents, our nurses don't learn nursing uniforms. They look like everybody else. They have their sunrise, t-shirts their shorts, their sneakers. They have a golf cart. So if a child is playing kickball up in the upper field and falls and scrapes her knee, she doesn't then go down to the nursing's tent, as you would probably do in a regular camp.

Aileen Hoffman:

The nurses go to her and they do that. And it's usually just like a band-aid and a kiss on the head and get back in there. But the reason why we do it the reverse way is because we don't want these kids to leave playing. We want them to stay in the environment of just being a kid. And that's why we created sunrise. Our mission is simple. We're just giving back the joys of childhood, back to children with cancer and their siblings. So there's a lot of nuances that most people wouldn't know that really specific to children with cancer and their siblings. And again, we, everyone in our, our staff, they have to wear a head covering. They have to wear a hat. They have to wear a bandana. You can't walk on the campgrounds unless you have a head covering. And the reason why we do that is in solidarity for the ball, children who have to wear a hat everywhere else, children with cancer, children with cancer at school. If you have a bald head, you're the kid with cancer, or you're the brother and sister who has a brother and sister as cancer, sunrise, they're just kids. And we try to put, do all of these little small twitches, if you will, to make them feel just like kids. So yes, it's a medical camp, but you wouldn't know it

Pete Moore:

Well, if, if any of the the campers want to hang out with Eisenstadt and I, we could show them that they're going to be bald at some point. So, you know, it might become a thing, you know, later on, except Gannon has got a little bit of hair. Yeah.

Aileen Hoffman:

But you know what, I'll tell you, if you both came to camp, your heads would become canvases because the kids will want to paint it. Because even the bald kids, their heads, we paint their scars. We did a whole program two years ago where kids have major scars from their, from their parents, from their surgery. So we turned a program into turning their scars into something beautiful. So they started to paint their scars. So what they used to hide was now a piece of art.

Pete Moore:

The thing about summer camp is everyone talks about it throughout the year. So my assumption is that a lot of the kids that leaves summer camp and know that they're going into treatments when they get home could always look forward to like, I'm going back to summer camp, even though it's 12 months away. I think as a kid, I always had that long-term, you know, hope and, and it's coming down the pike, even though it's far away. So I'm sure that that helps, you know, with the, the hope and the fun that, that this is coming back around again, I'll kind of deal with what I got to deal with in order to get to that next, you know, camp season. So mark, what, you know, what are some of the programs that you've run with some of your networks and also how much does it cost to get a kid to go to camp for each summer?

Marc Eisenshtat:

Yeah, sure. I alien we should send Pete the video of the camper who found out that sunrise was open this year after COVID. Yes. I think that would be great for him to say that they videotaped a camper who his parents were telling him and his sister that camp was open again this year. And you could imagine these kids, like if we couldn't go to the condo for a year, like if we couldn't to go to camp for a year and found out that we had to stay home and kick the can, you know, which is, I guess what my wife did when she was at the camp. We, we we're always looking for different ways to raise money, right? They say money, doesn't buy happiness, but at sunrise money buys happiness and we have to raise money to make things happen. And, you know, there are lots of little DIY events that go on through the year and lots of big corporate sponsorships that help you know, help Ayleen hit the goals that she needs to hit every year to make things happen for these kids.

Marc Eisenshtat:

You know, but personally our, our team has done things like, you know, we had we had a before real day event in Bayshore where we had, you know, kind of took over the whole town. And we went from like a cycling class in the morning to you know, a restaurant kind of festival event in the afternoon with raffles and prizes and all kinds of stuff. We raised 10 grand in a day, like that helps those little things. And then I would see, we would see lots of little DIY fitness events. People would do a yoga class or a cycle class, and they would get people involved because people are doing this stuff anyway. So they would love to, you know, instead of that money going to the facility for that day, if the facility is open enough to donate that money, they'd love for that money to go to, to sunrise. And you know, I got together with my cousin, Randy, who's, you know, a career cycle and group fitness instructor down in Florida, and she's got a huge following and a huge fitness network. And this idea was launched to rise up for sunrise. And it's a national fitness and wellness expo June 4th, fifth and sixth. So it's gonna kick off with Randy doing this awesome cycle class. And if you've never been to one of her classes, it's intense, she's outrageous. She a, you know, she's like, I call her a celebrity spin instructor

Pete Moore:

And training for that event right now, by the way,

Marc Eisenshtat:

You knew better train and get your towels ready. And then it'll end on Sunday with a a yoga, a yoga nidra meditation session by this, this woman, Sarah Connerly. She's amazing. She's a, she's a wonderful, wonderful friend. And throughout the weekend, there will be different classes for everybody to kind of log on and, and do, do what you do. You know, high intensity interval, training, MMA, boxing, Tabata,

you know, whatever you know, who whomever is instructing a class. There are plenty of options during that weekend. And the goal is to really make this an annual event where we're raising a lot of money for this, for this walk.

Pete Moore:

And if anybody wants to donate \$180 and kick the can with Eisenstadt, and I will set up a special private event, if you donate daily. Yeah.

Aileen Hoffman:

I was going to say, just to add onto what mark is saying. Everything we do at sunrise is a hundred percent free to the families, which means we have to raise every single dollar. We've never charged one single dollar, and we never will. So, as mark said, we have to get credited. We do a lot of events. We've raised a ton of money over these last 15 years. We do golf outings. We do fancy dinners, cocktail parties. I oversee the walks and the endurance challenges which is very community oriented. Anybody can do it. And when mark and I and Randy and my team were saying, okay, how else can we engage the community? How can we get a capital audience? Who's already doing fitness? So we leaned into all of these instructors right now. We have 35 instructors around the country that weekend of June 4th, through the six, you can go onto our website, sunrise-walks.org to sign up. And you can, you can pick any one of those classes and take a class for \$20. That's it, it's \$20. The instructors are, are donating their time and their space. And our hope is to get, you know, a thousands of people going to these 35 instructors have fun, feel good, and do it to help give summer back to children with cancer. So simple. You don't have to, you know, you don't have to even go anywhere, roll out of bed, put on your sneakers and do it. And

Pete Moore:

Yeah, everything's virtual for, for this year. And hopefully down the road, we set up some land-based you know, studio and, and health club related events. So how much on average does it cost to, to have one kid go to camp for the whole summer?

Aileen Hoffman:

So we, up until this year, we've been saying it's, it costs approximately \$6,000 to send one child to camp. Now, because of the pandemic, we didn't have camp last summer for all the obvious reasons we couldn't safely bring our kids to camp. So this summer in April, we announced with working with a very intense medical committee that we're able to bring the kids back to campus. And we're, we're beyond excited. So, you know, Pete, as you said, like thinking about the summer, like our kids are coming back to their summer home, they're going to get to be with their camp friends, their camp, brothers and sisters. So, because it's going to cost a lot more to run camp this summer, we're going to have to have more insurance, more staff, more medical staff, more PPE, more bosses because of social distances. So we're averaging about for this year, about 7,500 to send one child to camp

Pete Moore:

Program. It's

Aileen Hoffman:

A seven and a half week programs. So again, we're a full summer. And what's also unique about us, Pete is that once a child is cleared by their doctor, so your parents, they had to fill out those. Remember I'm

sure. So fill out those horrible forms. Our parents have to fill out a lot more forms to be able to come and they have to be cleared by their doctors. Once they're cleared by their doctor to come to camp, they can come from one day. They can come for two days. They can come for the whole summer and everything in between. We literally have had children. Two summers ago, we had one child who was so second, all she wanted to do is get to camp. She got to camp the second to last day, the second to last day of the summer, she got to camp and she died two days later. So if a child could, this could be their only time to have an experience of day camp. So that's why, you know, every dollar counts and especially now the pandemic is going to be behind us. Right? Thank goodness. We're starting to feel some normalcy, but pediatric cancer is not going anywhere. So we're committed to doing everything we can to continue. So like you guys are, kids are thinking about going back to SOC sunrise summer after summer. What's

Pete Moore:

The what's the waiting list. Look like an application process for someone to get into camp. Okay. So

Aileen Hoffman:

Never a waiting list ever, ever, ever, ever a waiting list. We've never had one child wait, the application processes. If anyone's interested in, look, if we do anything from this podcast, if there's anybody who's listening, who knows someone who has a child with cancer, please send them to [scent sunrise, association.org](http://scent.sunrise.org) or [sunrise day camp.org](http://sunrise.daycamp.org), and find out about our, because we will make a space for your child or your simple or your other children in any of those regions. The application process is they just have to fill out the paperwork, get the clearance from their doc, and then they're there.

Pete Moore:

That's awesome. So just to tell you what we did before we did a fundraiser with the FD and Y for a halo BARR term, halo, FD, and Y fitness equipment fund Gannon. What are we up to now? And total equipment and cash over \$500,000 total between equipment and donations from all the studios. Yeah. So we got a program in now with a lot of health clubs. Unfortunately FDN, Y doesn't have a budget to get fitness equipment. We went to Iraq a couple of years ago and they said, Hey, I heard you guys work in the fitness industry. Can you get us some equipment? I said, you know, what do you, what do you need? And they send it out. We'll send you an email. I thought they were going to send me like six or eight, you know, treadmills and Stairmasters.

Pete Moore:

And they sent Gannon and I a list of 612 pieces of equipment that they needed for all their fire stations. They were like, oh, we got to do an event around this. So we set up this event. We had crunch fitness as, as a key sponsor. And we set up a group exercise classes at a number of the studios across Manhattan. So I'd love to replicate that with a sunrise. Once the dust clears on people going back fully to health clubs, but we'd love to participate and be helpful with our network in the virtual events coming up on June 4th, fifth, and sixth, and have the materials up there for people to have a hot link, to make donations on behalf of what you're doing. We are huge advocates of getting kids outdoors. One of our, you know, we've got three missions. One is to solve obesity.

Pete Moore:

One is to solve diabetes and three is to solve loneliness. And you're kind of circling around all those three with a cancer on top of it. So, you know, anything we could do to help support your initiatives

we'd love to do that. I'm overly biased because of my, my camp background. I used to have dreams of buying the camp and I had a couple of nightmares that the camp was sold out from under me. So anything I could do to help someone go to camp and have that experience, you know, we're, we're, we're all in on the halo side. So you want to just give us a little more detail on where people go and we'll, fast-track this podcast up

Aileen Hoffman:

Or so if you go to sunrise, dash walks.org/rise up, I mean, there's a whole rise up donate tickets, but if you do sunrise, watch sunrise dash, don't forget the dash walks dot or slash rise up. It'll bring you to our ticketing page, where you will see a menu of, as I said, about 35 instructors, a description and a picture of the instructor and have their class. All you have to do is go ahead and sign up. It's really quick. It's \$20. Of course, if you don't want it, you are not able to come. And you just want to make a donation, which we would love. Please feel free to do that. Please share it with everyone. Once you join the class, you can then forward it to everyone. There's something for everyone in this course catalog. If you will. There's stuff for kids. There's stuff early in the morning, late in the evening. So it's another way as mark said, and as you know, Pete and Dave, you say just a way for us to get our word out. We're leaving awareness, we're raising money so that these kids could just jump off the bus this summer and run into their summer home.

Pete Moore:

That's awesome. So from halo talks to sunrise walks, we'll see on the fourth. Thanks for coming on, whatever you're doing. Keep it up. Thanks. Thanks guys. Thanks a lot, guys.

Pete Moore:

Talk to you soon. Bye. Bye. Bye. I want to thank my friends at burn B R R R N for sponsoring this podcast, Dr. D innovative company behind the world, renowned burn board. Many of you don't know. I was one of the top roller hockey players in all of Nassau county. Back in 1988 to 1990. If I had a burn board watch out, I would probably be an N a H L legend got a seven day free trial on their on demand library of hundreds of workouts, \$30 off the purchase. Check it out@shop.is a burn.com. We'll have it in the show notes, use the checkout code halo and go burn it on the burn board, ice hockey in your living room at home fitness, low cost, low tech, low impact go halo, burn it up.