

Camp Memories will help youth

CAMP

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TIMES HERALD

The death of a loved one can be difficult for anyone to cope with but it's often even harder for children. That's why the United Way of Daviess County, Youth First and Camp Illiana have come together to offer Camp Memories, single day camp experience to help children in first through 12th grades overcome grief with the help of master's level social workers.

"Camp Memories is a bereavement camp that transforms the lives of children who have experienced loss," said Ellie Meade, Youth First regional development officer, who said the camp is offered free of charge.

Those attending camp, which will be held at Camp Illiana on May 4, will work with grief professionals and trained volunteers and will experience a day filled with music, art and play combined with grief education and emotional support.

"United Way of Daviess County is proud to say Youth First is a community partner of our and that we can stand behind their mission in serving our youth," said Zella Taylor, executive director of the local United Way. "With our Impact Committee and board of directors' approval, we are able to fully fund Camp Memories utilizing additional dollars we had left in our budget for 2018."

Meade said the free camp also includes confidence-building programs and age-based support groups

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that break the emotional isolation grief often brings. Due to capacity restrictions, the number of campers is limited to 30 children in each camp.

"At Camp Memories, children are comforted knowing there are other children who have had similar grief and loss experiences and feelings," said Meade. "Campers have an opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings and memorialize their loved ones. They are provided with the tools and resources needed during and after camp, including memories and friendships that have the potential to last long after camp is complete."

Meade said Camp Illiana, which hosts hundreds of campers each summer, is happy to provide a spot for Camp Memories.

"Camp Illiana for the last 70 years has been a treasured place where youth from all over attend and build positive community," said Meade. "Big challenges are overcome and memories are made at camp that are not

possible in other settings. We are so excited to partner with Camp Memories. The community that will be built through this worthy event will last a lifetime."

If you know someone that would benefit please contact Youth First's Social Work Department at 812-4218336 ext. 107 or Ellie Meade at 812-228-9824.



YOUTH FIRST'S Ellie Meade, Camp Illiana's Ben Miller and United Way of Daviess County's **Zella Taylor** pose for a photo at Camp Illiana. Youth First, Camp Illiana and the United of Daviess County have partnered for Camp Memories for youth in first through 12h grades who have experienced a loss. The camp, which is free, will be offered May 4.

Photo Provided

On May 4, 2019, three local non-profit agencies collaborated to provide an amazing experience for thirty-nine area youth. Camp Memories took place on the beautiful grounds of Camp Illiana, just outside of Washington. Camp Illiana graciously donated the use of their facilities and funding for the event was generously provided by the United Way of Daviess County. Youth First, Camp Illiana and United Way of Daviess County combined efforts to make this a very special day for young people that have experienced the loss of a loved one. Campers came from Vanderburgh, Gibson, Pike, Daviess, Martin and Orange Counties to participate; these youth were referred by Youth First Social Workers embedded within their schools, along with the help of other key school personnel.

Camp Memories was a free event that included confidence building programs and age-based support groups intended to break the emotional isolation that grief often brings. It was a day long experience filled with traditional camp activities combined with grief education and emotional support facilitated by grief professionals and trained volunteers. The thirty-nine campers (ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade) received support through both experiential and therapeutic activities. More than a dozen master's level Youth First Social Workers and MSW interns facilitated the day's activities and were available to provide support to the participants. Some of the activities included

memory bracelets, represent how feelings the inside/outside, the invisible string dye shirts. Experiential included an intense junior/senior high "baby" zip line for like "way-no way" and for campers to write to one another.



journaling, making painting masks to can look differently on making sand bottles, activity and making tie-camp activities high ropes course for school students, the younger kids, games making a graffiti wall encouraging messages

The day ended with a which each camper had a "memory item" that significance/meaning

that was lost. These special items included such things as pictures of special memories, blankets and pillows made in remembrance of a loved one and many other touching stories. Outcome studies indicate that children who have the opportunity to process grief with their peers are better enabled to discuss their emotions and cope more effectively with life changes that are often a function of the loss. The goals of Camp Memories, as with all Youth First programs, were to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors in an effort to build participants' opportunity for success both in school and in life. Open communication with parents/caregivers during registration and at the end of the camp was intended to help caregivers become more informed about the bereavement process and enhance their ability to respond to the needs of their grieving children.

closing circle activity in an opportunity to share holds special about the loved one