

## Camp Midicha

# A summer workshop for young diabetics

By LORRAINE McCLASH

A summer camp with an accelerated schedule of activities geared for a fast burn-up of sugar draws about 70 Michigan youngsters to each of its five sessions programmed for young diabetics.

Camp Midicha, located in Columbusville, northeast of Flint, can be best described as a summer workshop for youngsters to learn how to cope with giving themselves shots, testing their urine, planning their own meals and meeting new friends who also suffer from the malady.

Kathy Mesenbring, the 19-year-old daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Victor Mesenbring of Farmington, who works as a counselor in Camp Midicha this summer, summed up the biggest benefit of the camp for the campers when she said, "I'm not a diabetic. I'm a minority here."

"This is a turn-around for the kids who are always in the minority, for the kids who might be the only one in their class or on the block who have this problem."

Kathy, who has done a lot of social work with the Girl Scouts, is thinking of going into some kind of social work through her classes at Valparaiso University and got her summer job through a doctor in Prince of Peace Lutheran Church congregation.

But even on the staff, she is a minority. Camp director Dan Dongan said diabetics get first crack at the summer job openings in the camp.

"Probably three-fourths of the staff are diabetic and that includes the doctors, the kitchen help, the maintenance men, people who can empathize with these youngsters, who know what it's all about," he said.

THE YOUNGSTERS are well aware of their problem, and the medical aspects they are learning to cope with.

We met Ed Solomon, a Southfield youth who gave us his age as "nine and three quarters" when he was returning from the archery range and didn't catch up with him again until we spotted him with a group on a horseback riding stint.

But he told us that he and his sister and a couple of friends had given a carnival this spring in his yard at 17666 George Washington which raised \$177 for diabetes research. Now he's learning about chemical changes in his body, and when to raise or lower his insulin injections.

For the first time since the camp has been in operation, the staff is getting ready to receive diabetics who are as young as six years, in a pilot program, to see how it goes, Dongan said.

Lisa Sarah, who just finished first grade in Livonia's Randolph Elementary School, will be one of the littlest campers during that season, brought through her teacher, Char Kohn.

Mrs. Kohn uses her summers to work as arts and crafts director for Camp Midicha, while her husband Paul serves as senior counselor.

Her role at the camp puts her "on call" every morning, afternoon and evening. Her well-equipped cottage receives campers who come in groups for a scheduled activity, then may choose to return during a free time to finish something they've started.

When we met her, she was jogging her time helping youngsters finish up sand castles, macramé pieces, beaded necklaces and tie dying.

EVEN SO, free time is not all that free. We met Karen Wilkinson, a student at Farmington's East Junior High School learning to embroider her blue jeans in free time.

And Dartha Harner, 11, from Rochester's Northall School, choosing to spend her free time on a kick ball field. But many of the youngsters were back

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(P) 18

to their cabins working on a camp newspaper, or putting together a booth their group was preparing for Disco Night. Or getting costumes ready for Circus Day. Or learning a script for Star Night. Or were on a committee for Christmas in July. Or were involved in an upcoming Water Folies. Or dreaming up gag prizes for the campers' version of "Let's Make a Deal."

Through it all, campers are stopped in their tracks to check their urine four times

a day, a sharp reminder that diabetes is emerging as one of the nation's most serious public health problems, and is now the number-three killer of Americans. The discovery of insulin 40 years ago lulled the public into a sense of complacency but did not slow down the disease. At least five million Americans suffer from the condition now and authorities estimate there is yet another five million sufferers undetected.

The American Diabetes Association-Michigan Affiliate, Inc. sponsors and operates Camp Midicha. It is a voluntary health agency concerned with the detection, care and education of diabetics in the state, located at 4131 West Outer Drive in Detroit.

Information on the camp and numerous programs, educational classes and self-help groups will be given by contacting the office at 342-8333.

Photos by  
Cynthia Abbat



Southfielder Ed Solomon is a first-year camper getting his first introduction to horses and horseback riding.



Karen Wilkinson (right) is back for her fourth summer at Camp Midicha, learning how to embroider her blue jeans from counselor Christy Jones.



Kathy Mesenbring (second from left) starts out on a boating lesson with three of her four charges. The Farmington teen-ager is not a diabetic, which makes her one of the minority in the camp.

## What are these people doing?

# Summer camp is a field day at Cranbrook

Ever wonder where you are? Or what you've just found?

Cranbrook Institute of Science summer campers may know better how to answer those questions after their six one-week terms are over Aug. 13.

At the moment, about 50 students are learning everything they can about ecology, entomology, mineralogy, geology, anthropology, ornithology and limnology during the camp's daily sessions.

Students go on an all-day field trip each week and most will go on more than that in individual class groups. They visit the Erie Marsh which is on the west end of Lake Erie, Seven Ponds Nature Center for limnology (the study of lakes), the Ward Nature Center in West Bloomfield Township and others.

At the Ward Center, the students photographed were learning the process involved in making an archaeological dig.

"The students are not digging for things, they are just learning the techniques involved. There is no organized effort to find things there at all," reported Linn McClade, an administrative assistant at the Cranbrook Institute of Science.

"During those sessions the students are learning about the tools used in various scientific exercises. They learn the techniques of scientific study in the lab and in the field, as well as learning to interpret material they find," she said.

The camp is for junior high school students, and students who've already attended the camp once may attend again.

"We try to accommodate the fact that we'll have repeating students by changing the curriculum each year," Ms. McClade said.

"Do the staff members enjoy it, too? Well, I can tell you we always have extra staff members who want to be drivers for the field trips," she said.

The mapmaking sessions photographed are part of the geology study and is called "orienting."

"It is designed to give the student a better understanding of topography," Ms. McClade said. She was former curator of education for the science museum.

The camp is supervised by the museum's staff of scientists and educators who stress self-discovery techniques. The ratio of students to instructor is 10 to one.



Students make visual measurements for their topographical maps