

Day camp reaches out to kids of alcoholics

I want to grow up
I want to be happy
Be the best me that I can be
With every bit of strength I have
I'll try real hard to be drug-free.

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

They sing songs about the dangers
of cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol.

They wear T-shirts with the logo:
"Drug free that's me."
They put on plays with kids playing
the roles of addicts.
This is the first week of the new
Maple Grove Day Camp in West
Bloomfield, the first day camp in the
state - and maybe in the nation - designed
for children of alcoholics and
drug abusers.
It's free, thanks to a volunteer

staff trained by Maple Grove Community
Education and funds provided
by the Junior League of Birmingham.
And it's filled to its 30-child capacity,
with parents bringing youngsters
from as far away as St. Clair Shores,
Flat Rock and Canton and as nearby
as Troy, Southfield and Walled Lake.

SET ON THE wooded Maple Grove
site, and flanked by the treatment
center that houses teens and adults
recovering from chemical abuse, the
camp is divided by age groups.

Each day has a different focus, beginning
with information on alcohol
and drugs and what they do to body,
mind and personality. Feelings and
self image, defenses and coping,
family issues, peer pressure and getting
help are other topics.

The information is delivered
through games, crafts, group discussion,
songs, stories and drama.

ON THIS DAY, the youngest group
— first and second graders — draws
up a list of safe people, people to
whom they can turn if something
goes wrong in their lives.

Their list includes police officers
and grandma, mom and dad and
teachers. But tiny, blond, gamine-
faced Katy has another idea. "Let's
write all our names down because
I'm safe," she announces.

Following a song played on the
guitar by counselor Bonnie Kalinowski
of Union Lake about the evils

of tobacco, marijuana and alcohol,
Keith ventures, "My mom and dad
used to do marijuana."

NEARBY, SIXTH, seventh and
eighth graders sit on the ground discussing
their feelings about their
family situations. A counselor explains
that an alcoholic parent does
what he or she does because he has
an illness — not because the parent
doesn't love them.

But Earl, looking down at the
ground, tells the group "If they loved
you they wouldn't do all the things
that they do."

"Earl, your mom had to sign to let
you come here," he is reassured.

"My grandmother told her to,"
comes Earl's response.

Mary Anne, 15, a teen volunteer
from Bloomfield Hills, offers a
method of coping. She knows how
they're feeling, since she too comes
from an alcoholic home.

"You know what I did," she confides.
"I wrote a letter to my father. I
gave it to him, but sometimes I go
back and read it."

"We have to take care of ourselves,"
another counselor reminds.

MEANWHILE, THIRD, fourth and
fifth graders play a game in which
a ball of yarn is thrown to each person,
and that person wraps it around a
part of their body and then toss it on
to someone else. Now everyone is
entangled, and each must find a way to

get out of the net.

"If we can start to disengage ourselves
from everybody's problems,
we can get out of the web," says Kathy
Reynolds, a volunteer from Farmington.

She reminds them of the four C's:

- I didn't cause it.
- I can't control it.
- I can't cure it.
- I can cope with it.

Late Tuesday morning, camp directors
Kathy Walton and Betty Conger have
a chance to back off

from their administrative duties and
see how the program they designed
is working.

The two Rochester Hills residents
designed separate activities for the
three age groups, "but all with the
same objectives," Conger said.

"We're really, really happy," said
Conger at week's end. "We've had
good attendance, good feedback
from parents, staff and kids. And
kids who originally didn't sign up for
the overnight (scheduled at the end
of camp) now want to attend."

Camp deals with issues which hit now and later

One of every four school children
comes from an alcoholic family, according
to the National Council on Alcoholism.

The problems associated with
their childhood follow them to adulthood,
including a 50 percent greater
than normal chance of becoming
alcoholics themselves.

And, only about 10 percent of
these young children currently
receive help.

The Maple Grove Day Camp for
young children of alcoholics and
other drug abusers grew out of an
idea first put out by Dr. Glenn Craig
Davis, a Birmingham resident, and
chairman of the psychiatry department

of Henry Ford Hospital.

Funding from the Junior League
of Birmingham and volunteer training
and staffing by Maple Grove
Community Education secured it.
And West Bloomfield Parks and
Recreation will host the overnight
camping experience at Bloomer
Park which will end each of the two
two-week sessions.

The next camp starts July 22 and
runs 9 a.m. to noon Monday-Thursday
on the grounds of Henry Ford
Hospital's Maple Grove Center on
Maple Road in West Bloomfield.

A few openings are still available.
It is free. Call 661-6170 for more information.



Volunteer counselors like Kathy Reynolds of Farmington take
extensive substance abuse training and commit part of their
summer to the new day camp, which is the first one in the
state, if not the country.



photos by JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

By the second
day, friendships
had formed among
campers, who
all have the
common bond
of coming from
a family where
there is - or
has been -
chemical
abuse.

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