

Camp offers typical experiences for kids with special medical needs

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To your HEALTH
Looking out at more than 100 kids, from the porch of the main lodge at Camp Copneconic in Fenton, it's hard to distinguish the children they call the "kidney kids" from everyone else.

The nickname comes from the fact that they have kidney disease. The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan has been hosting the week-long Kids' Camp at the 84-year-old retreat for approximately 15 years.

The goal of the Kids' Camp, according to NKFM Program Coordinator Linda Johnson, is to provide activities for young people who might not otherwise find a camp that could accommodate their need for dialysis and frequent medical attention.

"It's a nice opportunity for the kids to have fun and forget about it. We don't want them to dwell on their health so they camp right along with other children who don't have kidney problems," said Johnson. "Camp Copneconic is owned by the YMCA and is used year-round by a wide variety of groups and organizations ... not just the Kidney Foundation of Michigan."

Because of the special nature of the camp, children come from throughout Michigan and nearby states like Illinois and Indiana. Physicians, children's hospitals and outpatient dialysis centers make recommendations to their patients and families to attend the camp.

Dearborn resident Joe Lipani, 17, was urged by his doctor to partake in the camp for the first time in July. The Dearborn High School senior suffered from kidney failure at the age of eight after consuming what his mother Camille Lipani believes



Test: Eric Ziga, 15, takes a few minutes before lunch to check his blood sugar level. Kathy Carroll of Canton, a registered nurse from Children's Hospital of Detroit, looks over his should to monitor his levels.

was undercooked "chicken."

Lipani's organs suffered permanent damage, causing a gradual decline in his kidney's over the past eight years.

"I'm really proud of him knowing all that he's been through," said Camille.

In 1998 the Dearborn teen's health status made it necessary for him to start hemodialysis, three times a week for up to five hours at a time.

"I'm on the machines Monday, Wednesday and Friday after

school," said Lipani who receives dialysis treatments at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit.

Lipani says he currently maintains an inactive status on a transplant list to receive a kidney and will progress to active status when he chooses to do so.

"It's my decision," said Lipani. "I'm not quite ready. I'm scared of rejection."

Eric Ziga, also from Dearborn, bunked in cabin Winschago — the same as Lipani. Ziga, 15, offered his fellow camper a different perspective on the illness — Ziga received a kidney approximately three years ago. After trying hemodialysis, the Dearborn teen says he opted for peritoneal dialysis which he could do at home on his own — avoiding the significant amount of time hemo treatments demand of patients each week.

Peritoneal dialysis is performed by introducing dialysis solution into the abdominal cavity through a catheter. The natural membrane lining of the cavity is a semi-permeable membrane where waste products and excess water from the body pass through the membrane into the dialysis solution. This solution can be drained out of the abdomen into a bag and be thrown away in about 45 minutes compared to the 4-5 hour process of hemodialysis.

Ziga said he too had fears about a transplant but wouldn't trade how he feels now for anything. "I was tired all the time, now I feel fine."



STAFF PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY

Reaching out: The low-ropes exercise provides an opportunity for the kids to work together. Above, Eric Ziga, 15, of Dearborn, pulls one of his fellow campers to safety.

Lipani and Ziga both said they didn't come to camp with the purpose of sharing their medical backgrounds but to have fun — meeting other kids who have walked in their shoes was an added bonus.

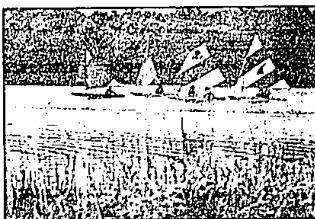
Like any other camp

For the most part, the Kids' Camp is no different

than any other. Children between the ages of 8 and 17 participate in activities such as archery, games, swimming, arts/crafts, boating, canoeing, softball, kayaking and horseback riding.

There are very few restrictions for the "kidney kids." All of them are weighed and have their blood pressure monitored each morning and medications

Please see CAMP, B5



Sail away: Camp Copneconic in Fenton, owned by the YMCA, offers campers a wide variety of activities from boating to horseback riding.

Music to our ears:

"I sold my piano right away!"

Anna D. of Bloomfield Hills

We're pleased to introduce a few of the many folks who are also singing our praises.

M. P. of Farmington Hills advertised two cars—

"I was amazed with the response from The Observer & Eccentric. My husband couldn't believe the calls we received—you don't need to put in a lot of detail, your items *will* sell!"

Marc C. of Northville advertised his open house—

"I had several people show up and received three offers. I closed the deal within *three days*"

Karon A. of Franklin was looking for a live-in housekeeper—

"I was very pleased with the response. I was reluctant to place the ad, but I'm so glad I did. I received more than 30 calls and have several good candidates."

Lori C. of Troy advertised her car and furniture—

"I had great success—the Observer and Eccentric Classifieds give great exposure to a lot of wonderful, polite, sincere people."

Mark C. of West Bloomfield furniture—

"I sold nearly the whole Drexel Heritage collection on the first day. Everyone who called and bought merchandise saw my ad in the Observer. Your clientele is much better than other papers I've used."

Myra F. of Farmington Hills advertised her duplex—

"I've had the best response from your newspaper. I'd rather place an ad with The Observer & Eccentric than with either of the major Detroit papers."

Janice P. of Plymouth advertised her estate sale—

"I had tremendous response. Calls from everywhere—they all read The Observer. I'm very pleased."

Gloria G. of Redford advertised her car—

"I sold it yesterday. Your Classifieds worked great; I'll definitely use your newspaper again!"

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