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Grief camps timing, location change but mission stays the same: Bring healing to kids

(Pasadena, MD, June 27, 2019) —After 27 years of offering one overnight camp to help grieving children, Chesapeake Life Center held its first children’s grief day camp on the evening of June 21 and during the day June 22 on Hospice of the Chesapeake’s John & Cathy Belcher Campus in Pasadena, Maryland. Clad in tie-dyed T-shirts they designed for themselves, 29 children ages 6 to 13 took over the administrative building and wooded grounds to find a little peace and a lot of joy.

It takes a lot of creativity and many trained volunteers to help make bereavement camp a success. The team of professional social workers and counselors were joined by 25 volunteers with a passion for helping kids. They included:

- 20 adults and 5 teenagers.
- 4 volunteers who were helping at the camp for the first time.
- 8 facilitators, who met throughout the past year to plan a safe day of working through loss.
- 1 Great White Pyrenees therapy dog named Isaac.

Volunteers helped in a variety of roles, including leading arts and crafts, serving as camp nurses, set up and clean up and more. There also were more than 15 individuals, organizations and businesses that helped provide the funds to make this an affordable time for families already dealing with loss.

Though the nonprofit has changed the timing, location and number of its grief camps, the center’s director, Susan Coale, said the goal remains the same. “We want kids to understand that they are not alone,” she said. “There is a power that comes just from being together, hearing from others how they live with grief. And as it has been for nearly three decades, there will be many well-trained loving adults to help them on their path.”

The next children’s grief day camp represents another first for the center: It will be at the College Park Airport and Aviation Museum from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aug. 17 and include activities in the museum. For details, visit <https://www.hospicechesapeake.org/event/childrens-grief-day-camp-in-prince-georges-county>. Another grief day camp experience is planned to take place in October in Anne Arundel County.

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All photos taken at the Hospice of the Chesapeake's John & Cathy Belcher Campus in Pasadena. High resolution photos available upon request.



(June 22, 2019) Middle school camper Peyton Wheatley, covers her ears as fellow camper Harrison Sudano, right, prepares to pop open a bag of beads. Also pictured is Amel Wheatley. Photo by Elyzabeth Marcussen, Hospice of the Chesapeake



(June 22, 2019) From left, Avery Fremen, Ryan Sartwell, Carmello Brice and Mason Conner take a break from a scavenger hunt to ride one of several bench swings in the Children's Memorial Garden. Photo by Elyzabeth Marcussen, Hospice of the Chesapeake



(June 22, 2019) Calvin Yokanovich hugs pet therapy dog, Isaac, a Great White Pyrenees, as Ava Zarbin, left, waits her turn. Photo by Elyzabeth Marcussen, Hospice of the Chesapeake



(June 21, 2019) Moriah Butler holds up the camp shirt she is tie-dying. Also pictured are, left, camper Harmony Downes, and to Moriah's right, Chesapeake Life Center social worker Sarah Montgomery and camper Sameenah Sutton. Photo by Susan Coale, Chesapeake Life Center.

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Chesapeake Life Center, a program service of Hospice of the Chesapeake, serves hospice family members and the community with bereavement services and activities aimed at enhancing the quality of life for those grieving the loss of a loved one.