

FOCUS: HEALING



Brynn Cumicek holds Winnie during a visit by Compassionate Canines to Camp Lloyd on Tuesday at the Maunthe Center on the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus. Photos by H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette

# Camp Lloyd helps kids with loss of loved ones

## UWGB, hospice mix fun with grief counseling

By Kelcie C. McCrae  
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Ella Peters really misses her teddy bear.

Last year, Peters' life was turned upside down when her dad died from a brain tumor.

"He was really big," said 7-year-old Peters. "He felt like he was a teddy bear."

Peters especially misses playing with him, seeing him every day. And, of course, his great big bear hugs.

**VIDEO ONLINE** As a way to cope with this loss, her mother signed Ella

To watch a video of Camp Lloyd, click on this story at [www.greenbaypressgazette.com](http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com).

up for a different type of summer camp.

Camp Lloyd is a day camp designed for young people grieving the death of a loved one.

Here, children have a place to talk about their loss and still enjoy being a kid in the summer.

"It was a hair-brain idea that I had been brewing for five years," said program director Ilene Cupit Noppe.

"We wanted to show the kids that even when you're suffering from a loss, it's OK to have a good time."

Camp Lloyd started in 2006 in partnership with Unity Hospice of Green Bay and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

The idea of the camp came from her husband, who lost a loved one at a young age. Lloyd Noppe lost his dad when he was 8 years old. Ilene Noppe believed that if a camp like this existed for her husband, he would have benefited knowing other



Counselor Danielle Furton plays the game "Alice the Camel" Tuesday with Jack Weaver, front, Owen Novitski, center, and Makayla DeGrave during Camp Lloyd.

children who also were grieving.

When it started six years ago, the camp had nine participants. Today, 45 children are enrolled, which is five more than its previously established cap of 40. Noppe said she just couldn't turn a child away.

Each day of the weeklong camp features a grief-related activity structured through "healing circles."

Grief counselors encourage campers to share their stories and talk about their feelings. As a way to encourage fun, organizers also set up activities such as swimming, animal shows, and visits from dogs called Compassionate Canines.

On Tuesday, Compassionate Canines president and founder Molly Johnson brought therapy dogs to the camp to provide support and com-

fort. Each therapy dog is trained to help those grieving. They also visit funeral and nursing homes, hospice sites and hospitals.

"We try to balance out high-energy activities for children who need the release with creative activities," said Gail Trimberger, a licensed social worker and grief counselor. "Dogs bring great comfort to people."

Johnson this week showed children how she trains the dogs to do tricks on whistle commands. The most popular part of the 30-minute presentation was teaching Madigan, a black lab, to touch her nose on a box.

"It was really cool to see the black dog do tricks," said Blake Novitski.

"I really liked it."

Novitski, 10, lost his dad to a heart attack two years ago. Since the death, Novitski has come to Camp Lloyd in the summer.

"It's just really fun, and it doesn't let me think about it, so I don't cry or anything," said Novitski about the camp. "Swimming is the funnest thing here because at the end of the day it's just really fun."

Camp Lloyd is mostly staffed by current and former students of Noppe, a professor of human development at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Some counselors receive class credit while others just receive the satisfaction of spending time with the children.

"A lot of counselors return not for the credit or anything, but just out of the kindness of their heart," counselor Lindsey Koehler said. "I'm happy to give up one of my weeks and be here, it's that important."

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