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Camp REACH OUT helps children manage grief

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Bereavement counselor talks with campers about the challenge they just completed

[Donna Snapp](#)

Over eighty children attended HPH Hospice Camp REACH OUT 2018, on March 2 to March 4, 2018. The children, ages 5 through 18, had all experienced a significant loss during the year.

Grieving children may feel lost and alone and unable to communicate their feelings. Since 1993, Camp REACH OUT has helped children learn coping skills to manage their grief and express their sorrow. Meeting other children their age who have also experienced a loss teaches them they are not alone.

Arriving Friday afternoon, campers were assigned to one of eight cabins. Each cabin had two adult leaders and a bereavement counselor. Campers in each group got acquainted over dinner and then played human foosball, did yoga or joined the drum circle at the campfire.

On Saturday, after an early breakfast, the cabin groups rotated through several challenges like the Web, the Balance Beam, and the Wall, that seemed recreational but actually contain a therapeutic component. Each challenge required the campers to work together as a group to manage the challenge. With teamwork and mutual support, campers were successful. Counselors helped the campers recognize what each challenge had taught them. In the afternoon, campers expressed their emotions through art by painting and embellishing a mask, and then went swimming, or played ball or other games.



Campers work on helping each other on The Web

After dinner on Saturday, campers had a beautiful lakeside ceremony honoring their loved ones.

Parents arrived on Sunday for the closing service and awards and then toured the cabins and grounds with their children. Friendships and bonds had formed so the children who had been strangers on Friday exchanged phone numbers, embraced goodbye and promised to keep in touch as camp came to a close.

Megan Bruno, Bereavement Supervisor, said, “Over the past weekend, 68 dedicated volunteers and staff from HPH Hospice came together to provide a weekend of healing, hope and fun for 86 children from Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties. At Camp REACH OUT, campers learned how to cope with the difficult feelings of grief, as well as how to honor the memory of their lost loved ones.”

HPH Hospice offers several camps and bereavement and support programs throughout the year. For information, call 727-816-3647 or visit www.chaptershealth.org

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