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Birmingham-Bloomfield Eagle (MI)

Youth equestrian camp to hold fundraiser

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BLOOMFIELD HILLS - Activists will gladly pony up cash at a Sept. 20 fundraiser so that young cancer patients can ride tall in the saddle.

The second annual Giddy-Up Gala will raise money for **Camp Casey**, a Birmingham nonprofit group that connects ailing children with the enjoyment of horseback riding. The party will be held at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club in Bloomfield Hills.

Gala attendees will enjoy food, music, a raffle and a silent auction. To the highest bidder the auction will award prizes like vacation packages, golf getaways and VIP tickets to Jay Leno's "The Tonight Show."

Camp Casey spokeswoman Lauren Maiman was excited to get Fox 2 News co-anchor Monica Gayle to host the fundraiser.

"Monica is just fantastic, wonderful and always ready to do stuff for the community," Maiman said. "She didn't hesitate a second to come on and emcee for us. To have someone with her status ... is a huge jumpstart for us."

Molly Melamed, 25, said she founded **Camp Casey** five years ago while going to school at Michigan State University. At her first retreat, young cancer patients from Lansing's Sparrow Hospital rode horses and did arts and crafts. "It ended up being a really great day," she said.

Camp Casey uses horses in its programs because Melamed founded the nonprofit in memory of **Casey Foote**, a girl who loved horses but died at age 12 from brain and bone cancer in 2003.

Today, the group offers several services for young cancer patients. First, volunteers hold daylong horseback-riding retreats throughout Michigan. Another program will take a pony to a child's home under certain circumstances. Finally, **Camp Casey** sometimes takes kids to baseball games, apple orchards and other non-equestrian activities.

Melamed said **Camp Casey** operates on approximately \$100,000 per year, and added that her fundraiser's proceeds will cover necessary expenses like staffing, gas and vehicle insurance. Her group raised a little under \$10,000 last year, and organizers want to raise at least \$20,000 this time.

"We really upped the ante this year, so we hope we will exceed that by a long shot," she said.

The second annual Giddy-Up Gala will be held at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club, 405 E. Long Lake Road in Bloomfield Hills, 6:30-10:30 p.m. Sept. 20. For ticket information, visit <http://www.Camp-Casey.org> or call (248) 514-2626.

You can reach Staff Writer Eric Czarnik at eczarnik@candgnews.com

Caption: Volunteer Andy MacKellar of West Bloomfield helps Kelly Crawley of Farmington Hills ride a horse as part of a **Camp Casey** retreat. Among other things, **Camp Casey** is a nonprofit that brings horses into the lives of children with cancer. Photo by Nancy Harshfield

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