

## Therapeutic camp for kids with cancer gets needed transportation

### Family business donates trailer

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Several times a year, Camp Casey pairs therapeutic horses with children battling cancer. But unlike most summer programs, it has no campground. Instead, the camp travels to equine farms throughout Michigan for daylong workshops.

That makes the 5-by-8-foot covered trailer donated by a Livonia family's business practically essential.

The 2-year-old humanitarian organization uses the trailer to transport its equipment, such as helmets and saddle bags. This summer, Camp Casey was in Davisburg on June 24 and is scheduled for Aug. 26 in Lansing.

Camp Casey, named for 12-year-old Casey Foote -- who died of bone and brain cancer in 2003 -- can accommodate as many as 18 children.

Volunteers sign up to serve as wranglers who escort the children as they ride.

Horses are provided by their owners.

Doug Vandenberg, who heads Joe's Trailers -- a utility, landscaping and mesh-gates trailers and trailer parts company -- first learned about the camp from a cold-call donation letter that came in the mail.

Impressed by Camp Casey's mission, the Vandenberg's gave them a new Interstate waterproof trailer, worth \$1,600, which the camp organizers asked volunteer artists to decorate with bright-colored pictures.

"This made our lives so much easier," camp founder and Executive Director Molly Melamed said of the trailer. We knew how there was a demand for kids outside of Lansing, but we needed to meet them. ... How do we do that if there's so much equipment we need to lug?"

In addition to enjoying riding and grooming gentle horses, the children can take part in outdoor activities with siblings and learn confidence-building exercises to help with their cancer battles.

"They're doing such a fine job," Vandenberg said of Camp Casey staff. "Anything to help them out is great."



Doug Vandenberg, his wife, Debbie, and daughter Hillary, owners of Joe's Trailers, donated a trailer to Camp Casey, a traveling one-day workshop that pairs therapeutic horses with children battling cancer. Camp Casey sessions are booked through 2007. (ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press)

Interest in the therapeutic program has grown and camp sessions are booked through 2007, Melamed said.

The donation "was able to affect 30 children minimum just this summer alone," she said.

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