



June 8, 2008

## Local Optimists pony up cash for Camp Casey

Farmington/Farmington Hills Breakfast Optimist Club and its affiliated Junior Optimist Octagon International Club have made a \$1,000 commitment in support of the ongoing activities of Camp Casey.

The Optimists presented the check to Camp Casey at a June 4 breakfast.

Camp Casey, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, travels to horseback riding facilities throughout Michigan to provide a cost-free series of one-day retreats for kids with cancer and their families.

This idea was inspired after founder Molly Melamed, a 25-year-old Farmington Hills resident, witnessed the obvious effect horses had on Casey Foote, a little girl who died too young from bone and brain cancer in 2003.

At age 19, Melamed designed, organized and launched Camp Casey, all while attending Michigan State University full time.

What was supposed to be a one-time activity day for Sparrow Hospital patients has morphed into a mobile day camp throughout all of Michigan. Now in its fifth year, it has already reached hundreds of kids. Five camps are scheduled for summer 2008, including the first-ever overnight retreat, that was made possible through donations, like that from the Optimist Club.

Twenty campers ride horses, make arts and crafts, play games, hunt for treasure and more. Camp Casey gets children (and their families) back into the game who have been sidelined by cancer.

Siblings, who are often overlooked due to the sick child's immediate needs, join in on the fun and are made to feel special for the day, too. For some families, due to health restrictions or financial limitations, this is the first vacation they've had in years.

The Optimists' donation will fund Camp Casey's June 29 camp in Goodrich. This camp services the Detroit-area families whose children suffer from cancer.

The Optimist motto, "Friend of Youth," summarizes this service club's mission of providing hope and positive vision to bring out the best in kids.

Childhood Cancer Campaign is one of the official programs sponsored by Optimist International, so involvement with Camp Casey is a natural fit for this group of community-minded volunteers. Other Optimist and JOOI activities include speaking and writing competitions, recognition of exceptional student leadership and support for local programs for at-risk youth.

For more information about the Farmington/Farmington Hills Breakfast Optimist Club and its partnership with Camp Casey, visit [www.farmingtonhillsoptimists.org](http://www.farmingtonhillsoptimists.org) or call Marguerite Smith at (248) 474-9680 or Tom and Cathy Neal at (248) 553-3279.