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Sunday, October 14, 2007

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Published October 14, 2007  
[ From Lansing State Journal ]

## Camp Casey kids have a blast visiting 'haunted farm'

Pumpkins, mazes, horse-drawn rides bring bright smiles

Hugh Leach  
Lansing State Journal

MASON - There was no fear on their faces as about 10 children, ages 2 to 10, visited a "haunted farm" Saturday afternoon.

Even the "scary" cancer they are dealing with was forgotten as the kids painted pumpkins, rode a horse-drawn wagon, and explored corn and sorghum mazes.

The youngsters and their families, all participants in Camp Casey, a nonprofit organization that provides free fun activities for kids with cancer, were special guests at Shawhaven Farm south of Mason.

"This is the second year we have had a haunted farm, and we wanted to do something to give back," said Tami Shaw, the farm's co-owner. "Camp Casey does a lot of horse-related activity for kids, and giving them rides in a horse-drawn wagon just seemed natural."

Shawhaven also is donating a portion of proceeds from its pre-Halloween events this weekend and next to Camp Casey, which was named for Casey Foote, a 12-year-old Grand Ledge girl who died of cancer in 2003.

Shaw said her stepson is friends with Casey's older brother, which created even more incentive to help.

Molly Melamed, who now lives in the Detroit area, started Camp Casey four years ago while she was a student at Michigan State University.

She met Casey through a horseback riding program she was teaching. Melamed originally intended Camp Casey to be a one-time event.

"When one of the kids told her it was the best day of his life, Molly knew she had to keep going with it," said Lauren Maiman, Camp Casey director of public affairs.

"I love it," Melamed said. "I have made so many new friends. Plus, I get to paint pumpkins and go on wagon rides with the kids. I get to see the difference this program makes for them and have so much fun doing it."

Although originally Camp Casey activities were all horse-related, it now is incorporating other activities, such as trips to Detroit Tigers games, an apple orchard visit and the Saturday trip to Shawhaven

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(Photo by robert killips/Lansing State Journal) Pumpkin-painting time: Michael Coffland, 5, of Riverdale, concentrates on painting a pumpkin Saturday at Shawhaven Farm near Mason as part of a Camp Casey outing.

**Photo Gallery:**

[Camp Casey](#)

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Farm, to provide activities year-round to help the kids take their minds off their illness.

"He and I absolutely love Camp Casey," said Jodie Pelikan, whose son Caleb, 5, dressed in a Batman costume for the event.

"It gives us a chance to have a lot of fun and to meet others who are going through the same thing."

Steve White of DeWitt, whose son Shane, 6, is a Camp Casey participant, agreed.

"Shane is having a blast," he said. "This is huge for us. It's a chance for us to do things together we might not normally do, and it gives us a feeling we're not alone in this."

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or [hleach@lsj.com](mailto:hleach@lsj.com).

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