

Camp Kesem Augustana

Written by Natali Bode
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Families can register children impacted by a parent's cancer

Camp Kesem is a free, week-long overnight summer camp for children who have or had a parent with cancer. Camp this summer is July 21-27, and 9 free spots are available.

Camper applications and more information on Camp Kesem at Augustana College can be found at www.campkesem.org/augustana

In this region, Camp Kesem is held at the YMCA camp near Boone, Iowa, and it is organized by Augustana College student volunteers under the guidance of local professionals and in cooperation with Camp Kesem's national headquarters.

Augustana College students serve as counselors and work all year to fundraise and plan for the camp. Plus student-counselors receive over forty hours of training prior to camp.

The Camp Kesem program model was founded in 2000 at Stanford University. Since then, it has grown and included 37 camps in summer 2012. Projections for this coming summer show four new camps will be added.

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Campers participate in fun activities including sports, drama, arts and crafts, team-building events, scavenger hunts and talent shows. In addition, each night before bed, the campers participate in “cabin chat,” a time to talk and open up to their peers and counselors.

Children who have a parent who has or had cancer often lack sufficient external support. The complexity of emotions they experience can easily go without attention. It is often challenging for these children to find peers with whom they can relate, resulting isolation and fear.

Camp Kesem advisor, Dr. Michael Amylon, pediatric oncologist at Stanford Hospital emphasizes the importance of an experience like Camp Kesem. “These kids have their world knocked right out from under them, and often they have no where to turn to get help and support. Camp Kesem provides a magical place of respite and play, and a group of other kids in the same situation who understand what it's all about and can offer unique and important peer understanding and friendship.”

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