

HopeKids and families enjoy relaxing day on Lake Minnetonka I

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HopeKids go for a swim on a Big Island beach on June 17. (Sun Sailor photo by Paige Kieffer)

The Minnetonka Power Squadron and the Wayzata American Legion Post 118 hosted a HopeKids event on June 17 on Lake Minnetonka, where families of children with life-threatening illnesses were able to enjoy a fun, relaxing day on Big Island.

The nonprofit HopeKids partnered with the Minnetonka Power Squadron to give 140 participants a fun day that included a picnic, scavenger hunt, face painting, swimming, fishing, time with family and friends, and private boat rides from Wayzata to Big Island. The children also got to drive the boats during the ride.

The event was held at the Minnetonka Power Squadron facility on Big Island.

“The purpose of HopeKids is to give these kids and families something to look forward to,” said HopeKids Minnesota Director Brian Anderson. “When they have something to look forward to, it helps them get through those medical things.”

Every week HopeKids hosts free events across the Twin Cities for children with life threatening illnesses. Anderson said these events allow the children a chance to feel normal.

“When they attend these events you see joy on their faces. ... It makes a big difference,” Anderson said. “When they have that opportunity it makes them feel special.”

HopeKids operates in Minnesota, Utah, Arizona and Texas and with organizations across the country to provide a activities for terminally ill children. HopeKids Minnesota has done other events with the Minnesota Wild, the Minnesota State Fair, Minnesota Twins and other organizations.

The Minnetonka Power Squadron partnered with HopeKids in 2011 after one of their members, Steve Camp, saw a news story about a young girl with cancer.

Camp said he was impressed with how happy she was despite being hospitalized. He said that he was inspired to help assist terminal ill children so he contacted Gillette’s Children’s Hospital, who connected him with HopeKids.

“The smiles on the kids faces make it worth it,” Camp said. “I wish we could do this more.”

Jennifer Repp attended this year’s event with her sons Carver, nine-years-old, and Conner, seven-years-old. Both

are terminally ill with heart conditions.

“It’s days like this you really enjoy and remember instead of the hospital life,” she said.

Camp said that while the event is aimed at assisting terminally ill children, they want to provide a unique experience for the child’s family and siblings.

He said that he wanted the families to have a fun, relaxing day together.

Leanna Herron’s son Henry, three-years-old, was diagnosed with leukemia in February 2015. She said that the medical bills prevented the family from attending fun events together.

“It puts such a strain for a lot of parents,” Herron said. “This event has allowed us to be normal and do normal family things without being constrained by finances.”

Minnetonka Power Squadron Commander Dave Fine said, “It gives the kids and families a chance to get their mind off of things...to have the opportunity to support these families makes it worth while.”

On June 17, 105 out of 205 members of the Minnetonka Power Squadron volunteered for the event. Volunteer Mike Skelly, who has been attending all four years said, “It’s amazing to be able to contribute to giving these kids and families a day of no worries.”

He added, “It feels amazing seeing their faces light up.”

The Minnetonka Power Squadron raised \$7,500 to donate to HopeKids and the Wayzata American Legion Post 118 raised \$2,500.

For more information on HopeKids visit hopekids.org.

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Beth Horsch will serve as Mount Olivet’s Senior Pastor. (Submitted)

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church of Plymouth reached a significant milestone at a congregational meeting in May, when 240 members called Pastor Beth Horsch to be Lead Pastor. A 98 percent vote of approval made Horsch the first female lead pastor in the congregation’s 135-year history.

Prior to her appointment as lead pastor, Horsch served alongside longtime Senior Pastor John Strommen for eight years.

Following Strommen’s resignation in January, the congregation began a five-month discernment process for finding a successor. The church council found Horsch to be the best fit for Mount Olivet’s congregational identity, and brought their recommendation to be voted on by the congregation.

Horsch formally accepted the call, stating, “We are the church in how we live each day; our presence individually and as a community extends compassion, generosity and love to those we encounter. ... I feel called to this work and our growing sense of community.”

Mount Olivet will now begin the process to find a new associate pastor. There will be a formal installation ceremony in the fall for both pastors.

Info: moply.org.