

Children With Cancer Attend SIU Med School's 25th Camp COCO

The 25th annual Camp COCO will host 130-plus campers with cancer and other blood disorders during its one-week session July 11 through 16. A project of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield, the camp will be held at the Timber Pointe Outdoor Conference Center on Lake Bloomington. The theme for this year's camp is "Camp COCO University."

(Note that the campers' 68 different hometowns are listed at the end of this release as well as details about covering camp.)

The campers from central Illinois receive special attention from a number of SIU's pediatric staff members, who spend the week providing medical care and spending time with their patients and some of their patients' siblings. Others who provide care and assistance are health professionals who treat some of the campers at the St. Jude's Affiliate in Peoria and community volunteers from Springfield.

"The campers get a second chance at the childhood they have lost during the camp's week of activities, giving them a time to just have fun. The hard work of volunteers and the contributors make this possible," said Dr. Gregory P. Brandt, SIU associate professor of pediatrics and camp medical director. Brandt is director of SIU's pediatric hematology/oncology division and a member of the Simmons Cancer Institute at SIU. He works with his pediatric team and staff from St. John's Children's Hospital plus others from St. Jude's to provide medical support to the camp.

There are nearly 100 camps listed with Children's Oncology Camps of America, which coordinates communication between the various camps and helps develop guidelines for their operation. Two other Illinois camps are located in the Chicagoland area.

The SIU pediatrics department has established the COCO Children's Cancer Fund, which supports the camp as well as year-round projects for patients being treated for hematological and oncological diseases. This year's camp is supported by the generosity of more than 600 individuals, service clubs and businesses.

Contributions to the COCO Children's Cancer Fund can be made payable to and mailed to the Camp COCO/SIU Foundation, P.O. Box 19666, Springfield, Ill. 62794-9666, 217-545-2955. Online donations can be made at www.siumed.edu/foundation/campcoco.htm.