GRIEF DOESN’T WAIT....

“Camp in a Backpack”
Banner Hospice Virtual Children’s Bereavement Camp
September 2020
With funding through the Dottie Kissinger Children’s Bereavement Camp fund, the Banner Foundation, and Banner employee “Better Together” contributions, Banner Hospice has offered in person bereavement camps at no cost to grieving children and their families for over 20 years.

Each child/teen would select a backpack the first evening and fill it with gifts and treasures throughout the rest of camp....
In spring of 2020, COVID 19 derailed our plans for in person camps in Payson, AZ.

However, the Banner Hospice Bereavement and Music Therapy teams knew that GRIEF DOESN’T WAIT for a pandemic to end…. thus Camp In A Backpack was birthed!
A backpack for each child and a re-useable shopping bag for each adult was packed full of supplies for the virtual camp!

To ensure proper safety precautions:
- Items were packed one week in advance by staff & volunteers wearing masks
- Backpacks and parent bags were sealed, and no items touched once packed
Our goal to adapt therapeutic activities done at camp to an online format in the Teams application produced a full schedule!

Friday September 25
6:30 – 8:00 PM  Opening Circle
S’mores & sharing on your own!

Saturday September 26
9:00 -10:00 AM  Create and share Memory Boxes
10:00 – 10:15 AM  BREAK
10:15 – 11:15 AM  Journaling and Grief Plan
11:15 – 12:30 PM  LUNCH – at home
12:30 – 1:30 PM  Songwriting and Music
1:30 – 1:45 PM  BREAK
1:45 – 2:30 PM  Breakthrough Activities (mummy wrap & finish line
2:30 – 2:45 PM  BREAK
2:45 – 3:30 PM  Closing Circle
Friday night program:
• Greeting
• Opening song
• Sharing circle
• Candle lighting
• Geodes – finding beauty in hard ugly places
• The Invisible String – book reading
• Closing song & candles

Families used their S’more kits after the meeting to enjoy S’more memories together
Friday night powerful moment

Honoring loved ones with candles...
Saturday morning – kids decorated a memory box and shared about their special person and some of the precious things they want to keep in the box.…

“When you put it on a box, it becomes a happy memory.” adult camper
Journaling, myths, and creating a grief plan….

“I love my fancy notebook!!!!” child camper

My Grief Plan

- When I feel sad, I can do these things to cope....
- I can talk to these people to help me feel better....
- I can think these thoughts.....
- Some ways I can take care of myself......

True or False?

- It is best to grieve alone.
- I need to be strong for others.
- I can replace the loss with someone or something else.
Music Therapy FUN!!!

Fun music, dancing animals, LOTS of laughter!

Every child received a musical instrument in their backpack to play and keep.
Songwriting to the tune of “Old Town Road” with blanks filled in by campers....

Music Therapy at it’s best!
BREAKING THROUGH GRIEF!!

Mummy Wrap – families wrap someone in streamers like a mummy and then that person “breaks out” of the confinement and tells what it feels like to get free!

The Finish Line – each child uses a 6-foot length of streamer and draws pictures or writes words, thoughts, things, they want to break through and leave behind at the end of camp. Adults hold the streamer, and the child runs through it to the finish line of the grief work done at camp!
OUR VOLUNTEERS ROCK!

Banner Hospice Volunteers sewed masks and matching pillow slips for each child and helped staff prepare and pack the backpacks!
CLOSING CIRCLE
THE BEGINNING
OF NEW FRIENDSHIPS
GRIEF DOESN’T WAIT – SO WE DID SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

What virtual Camp in a Backpack has meant in their words:

“This is very therapeutic.” - adult camper

“This is fun!” – child camper

“This makes me so happy.” - adult camper

“Thank you, I love it!” . . . (and) . . . “Thank you guys!” . . . in reference to the volunteers who made pillowcases and masks for the campers. – child camper

“Thank you for letting me share my thoughts and feelings.” – child camper

“I am stronger; you taught me how to handle emotions.” – child camper

“I feel empowered to help (the children) work through their own emotions.” – adult camper

“... knowing how to express emotions without getting frustrated.” – adult camper