

Camp teaches kids to believe in 'no limits'

By: Alison Boggs Staff writer
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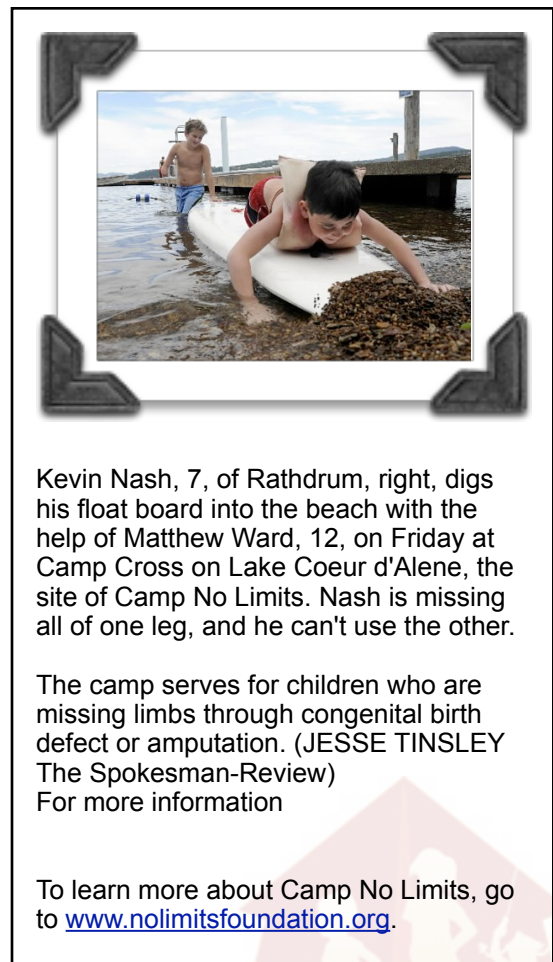
The four-day camp costs \$350 a child, with additional fees for parents and siblings. Financial aid is available. "No kid is going to miss camp because they can't afford it," camp organizer Carrie Davis said.

The upper-body strength in this Rathdrum second-grader was born of necessity. Kevin Nash was born without a left leg, and his right leg is half the length it should be. That doesn't seem to slow down the dark-haired, freckle-faced boy, who says "showing off" is his favorite thing about summer camp.

Kevin owes part of that confidence to this program, Camp No Limits. The camp for children who are missing limbs is held every August at Camp Cross on Lake Coeur d'Alene, the second location of a program founded in Maine by occupational therapist Mary Leighton. "He's more outgoing, willing to try. It's helped him deal with talking about what happened to him with other kids," Kevin's mother, Angela Nash, said of the effect of three years of camp on her son. She and her husband, Bill, brought the whole family, including their three daughters and the children's grandmother.

The first Camp No Limits was in August 2004 in Maine after Leighton became inspired from her work with a 2 1/2-year-old boy missing three limbs.

In the program's second year, Spokane resident Carrie Davis attended on behalf of her company, Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics, to demonstrate new technology. Davis, who is missing her left arm below the elbow, went home with a desire to start a camp in



Kevin Nash, 7, of Rathdrum, right, digs his float board into the beach with the help of Matthew Ward, 12, on Friday at Camp Cross on Lake Coeur d'Alene, the site of Camp No Limits. Nash is missing all of one leg, and he can't use the other.

The camp serves for children who are missing limbs through congenital birth defect or amputation. (JESSE TINSLEY The Spokesman-Review)
For more information

To learn more about Camp No Limits, go to www.nolimitsfoundation.org.

Coeur d'Alene. She happened to sit next to the director of Camp Cross, run by the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, on her plane ride home.

The first North Idaho Camp No Limits was held in summer 2006. Camps in California and Florida have followed, and a fifth in St. Louis is planned for 2009.

The 2008 session of the Idaho camp will wrap up Sunday. Ten children from North Idaho, Spokane and Montana came with their parents and siblings to participate in occupational, physical and group therapy sessions to build their confidence, life skills and physical abilities. Group therapy sessions also are offered for parents and siblings. The kids do arts and crafts, swim in the lake and play games. They also get a chance to goof around and be kids with others who look like them.

“One of the big things is knowing you’re not by yourself. They can come here and they can be themselves,” said Kathryn Hutzenbiler, of Billings, whose 10-year-old daughter, Sara, is missing her left leg below the knee, the toes on her right foot and several fingers. She said the confidence Sara has gained from the camp has been invaluable. “It’s been referred to as a ‘safe place.’ ”

Angela Nash said the parent support groups have helped her to network and learn about resources for Kevin. “We want him to try things no matter what,” she said. Growing up in Spokane, Davis spent years trying to hide her prosthetic arm – not because she was uncomfortable, but because other people were. She chose activities that she thought she could handle, such as playing the trumpet, instead of doing what she wanted to do: play guitar. She didn’t tell her parents when kids teased her at school because she didn’t want to upset them.

“It’s my goal to catch every kid and give them the sense that they’re not about what they don’t have,” said Davis, now a 37-year-old triathlete and mother of two. “We all have a head and a heart and soul and a spirit.”

