



## Learning in the great outdoors

By JEAN TROCHIO  
of the Journal

Singing around a campfire. Roasting marshmallows. Tramping through the woods. Have any summer memories like that?

Well, this year the Timbertop Nature Adventure Camp will give those memories and more to children termed "learning disabled."

Timbertop's concerns are two-fold, said Mary Duritsa, director of the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station.

It's environmental education, or "fun-stuff," like learning outdoor camping skills, canoeing, swimming, hiking, frog-hunting and experiencing the wonder of the natural world.

Like the wonder of 9-year-old Brian Christiansen who discovered racoon bones on a camping trip. Or the thrill of Debbie Orloff, 13, who already knew that beavers were color blind, but who finally saw one at close range.

But, it is not only 13 days of learning in the out-of-doors — it is encouragement in reading and writing for children with special needs. And every day includes a structured hour of reading.

Because of a joint effort by the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station and the Association for Services to the Educationally Handicapped — 32 learning disabled (LD) children from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa converged this week and last amid the pines and soft hills of the Environmental Station's residential camp located in Amherst Junction.

"This is the first year year that we have offered this particular camp here," said Ms. Duritsa.

The environmental station runs a regular nature adventure camp every year, she said, but Timbertop '86 is a combined effort with a combined goal.

"What we did for this camp, was take an idea that was in Central Wisconsin for 10 years for the learning disabled, and combine the nature adventure camp with it," she said. From 1967 to 1974, Timbertop was a camp run by Rhoda Brooks, an LD teacher from Waconia, Minn., who camped in Wisconsin every summer with her family, Mrs. Duritsa said. With her family and teacher associates, Ms. Brooks formed the Association for Services to the Educationally Handicapped, the group that sponsored the original Timbertop camp for children with learning disabilities.

A coincidental meeting of these two women led to the continuation of the Timbertop camp at the Environmental Station here, Ms. Duritsa said.

"And now Rhoda is LD consultant for this program. She put together the reading component."

Because of the many different types of learning disabilities, the reading program at the camp has to be individually tailored to each child, according to Ms. Brooks.

"Before the children arrived at camp," she said, "we received information from parents, teachers and the school about the educational plans that each of the children are on."

The term "learning disabled" is difficult to define, said the women, and there is a great deal of misunderstanding about the term, mainly because it encompasses such a wide variety of learning problems.

"LD can be a matter of an eye-hand coordination deficiency," Ms. Brooks said. "It can be a difficulty in following auditory directions, too. If you say to a child 'do this, this and this,' they don't understand all the different parts of the instructions. So, here at camp, if they're learning archery they can learn it one step at a time."

Or it can be a language problem. An inability to express themselves.

"Often it is a visual disability," Ms. Brooks said, "where letters will look upside down or backwards."

A learning disability that people are more familiar with is the "attention-deficit" or hyperactivity problem, she said. The child's inability to sit still or to concentrate just makes it very difficult for him or her to learn.

These learning disabilities, Ms. Duritsa said, are basically communication problems and whatever the cause, "it impairs their ability to learn and to get along with people."

"And," said Ms. Brooks, "there are emotional repercussions based on the fact that they don't do as well as others. There is an esteem problem that develops."

What Timbertop Nature Adventure Camp offers to these kids is very important, Ms. Brooks said.

"Most of these kids would have a hard time making a success out of a regular camping experience because most of the regular camping experiences would be more competitive," she said. "This camp is more low-key. We explain things for a second time, or a third time, until they understand it and we give them a chance to ask questions — more to their own drumbeat."

To help these 9-to-14-year olds move to their own drumbeat, Ms. Duritsa said, scholarships were available this year from conservation clubs, teachers and local service clubs.

"Next summer," she said, "the United Way will help us sponsor Timbertop. They are going to sponsor five partial scholarships for Portage County students to come here."

Timbertop Nature Adventure Camp is a part of a year-round environmental education program conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station.

## Timbertop Camp

It's time to relax with a good book (above) during the reading hour at Timbertop Adventure Camp at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station in Amherst Junction. At left, campers take a walk through the woods. Dana Lara (below) uses a computer to learn about the sounds made by the letter "u" at the camp for children with learning disabilities. The program combines fun in the outdoors with a special academic program to meet the students' individual needs. (Staff photos by Doug Wojcik)



### Births

St. Michael's Hospital  
Tuesday, July 1  
BRENEGAN, Catherine and Thomas, 1751 Pine St., a daughter.

Wednesday, July 2  
WERRA, Stephen and Ann, 2902 Evergreen Villa, Plover, a son.

RINKA, Delores and Keith, Amherst, a daughter.

### Campus Notes

Ronald C. Stelpflug, Menomonee Falls, is the recipient of a \$350 national prize given to graduating college students by the Society of Xi Sigma Pi, an honorary fraternity for scholars in the field of forestry resources.

Ronald was graduated in May with a bachelor of science degree from the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He majored in forest management.

## Goetz takes position as assistant pastor

Richard Goetz, a 1985 graduate of North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, has recently accepted a position as assistant pastor in the Port View Christian Center, at Assemblies of God Church in Port Washington.

Goetz, son of James and Nellie Goetz, is a 1981 graduate of Stevens Point Area Senior High School. He will work primarily with the youth program of the church. His wife Tammy, a 1986 music major graduate of North Central, will coordinate the music program there.

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