

July 12, 2005
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MAD ABOUT SCIENCE

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Staff

Camp teaches kids about space, taste buds, magnets and more

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Seven-year-old Justin Rolf of Urbandale had a blast at the Space and Mixed **Mad Science** camp last week.

"We made big rockets and shot off a rocket," Justin said.

The four-day science camp for second-through fourth-graders was sponsored by Johnston Community Education and held at Lawson Elementary School, 5450 N.W. 62nd Ave. in Johnston.

Jim Birkel of Pella is the owner of **Mad Science** of Central Iowa, a local affiliate of a national organization that provides science activities for children. Birkel said the camp's goal is to get students excited about science.

"They're having fun, and if they soak something up in the meantime, that's great," he said.

Austin Dobkins of Des Moines saw the **Mad Science** group shoot a rocket at his school and wanted to join the summer camp. He liked making his own miniature rocket out of paper and straws.

"You get to do a bunch of different experiments," he said.

Students participated in different learning activities and experiments based on space. They created a miniature version of the solar system and used bubbles to create the planets. They also simulated meteors striking the earth by dropping balls of various sizes into flour.

Students also learned about different scientific topics, including lasers, pollution and magnets. Justin learned more about pollution by adding food coloring to water to symbolize contamination. He didn't like the effects of pollution.

"It's pretty harsh for birds," Justin said.

Margaret Tian, 9, of Johnston had fun learning about taste buds and trying different foods. During the experiment, students made their own gumdrops and soda pop. She enjoyed learning more about science.

"You get to do a lot of things with your hands," Margaret said.

While they were having fun experimenting, students also had to be vigilant of safety by following directions and wearing safety goggles.

"We make sure to focus on the safety issues involved," Birkel said.

Annie Schwager, 20, of Des Moines helped Birkel teach the lessons. She enjoyed the hands-on experiments students could try.

"You can get messy and have a good time," Schwager said.

The experiments often make students curious.

"I'm really amazed with some of the good questions," Schwager said.

Johnston Community Education is offering several **Mad Science** camps this summer. For more information, call 278-0552.