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SCHOOL'S OUT!
Lageschulte Melanie
Staff

. . . and **Mad Science** is in at the Ankeny YMCA

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Atoms, static electricity and other science subjects were the focus of Ankeny children attending a YMCA camp last week.

The five-day, all-day program allowed plenty of time for detailed study and experiments. Activities organized by **Mad Science** of Central Iowa included spinning sugar into cotton candy, studying minerals and gems, and using pastel marshmallows and toothpicks to create atom models of various molecules. The camp was held at Northeast Elementary School, 1705 N.E. Trilein Drive.

Brianna Devin, 8, said she learned cotton candy was mainly made of sugar. "It heats up and just goes into strings," Brianna said. That was the best experiment, she said, "because we got to eat it."

Austin Lang, 9, said he also enjoyed making cotton candy. He said the children discussed how the spinning motion of the machine caused the sugar to turn into a sweet treat.

Another experiment gave the children a hair-raising experience as they touched a static-electricity machine. "I liked that big electrical ball thing," Austin said. "That was cool."

Nancy Olson, program executive for the Ankeny Family YMCA, said this was the first year the organization has hosted such an in-depth science camp in Ankeny. The children "get to take home a lot of neat things," Olson said, "They've been having some fun."

Olson said 17 children took part in the science camp, which was divided into groups for ages 6 through 8 and 9 through 11. Each section spent half of each day with Dan Chase, **Mad Science** instructor, and the rest of their time doing related activities with YMCA staff.

Chase said the **Mad Science** program uses simple vocabulary for younger children. Workshops for the older group are "a little bit more intense, a little bit more detail-driven."

Mad Science of Central Iowa is the first of the company's franchises in Iowa, Chase said, and the portable program is used at schools, private parties and special events. "Have science -will travel," he said.

Colin Quass, 8, said he enjoyed an experiment where Chase set out tanks of hot and cold water and added food coloring to both. The coloring floated to the top of the hot water, Colin said.

He said he took the class to "learn some things about science," and discovered "that everything's made out of molecules."

Catie Wram, 11, said she liked working with magnets. "It's cool to see how regular things work."

Kelsey Fredregill, 10, said she previously took part in a **Mad Science** class during an after-school program at Crocker Elementary School.

"I like optical illusions a lot," Kelsey said, and one of the most interesting things about an illusion is "how it makes you think."

Dakota Degroodt, 9, sampled the marshmallows when the children finished their molecule-building exercise. That was the best experiment, he said, "because it's sticky and it's good."

Gina Woolsey, 8, said she learned many new things at the camp. "Before, I didn't know that when atoms heated up, they expanded," she said.

The students also picked through containers filled with mostly sand and water, said Josie Wram, 9, to discover certain minerals. "We had to dig for them and we had to shake it," she said.

Science is "really fun," Josie said. "You don't know what's going to happen. It's a surprise."