

New camp offers science lessons, entertainment

BY ELIZABETH MARTIN
WAUKEE TODAY

"Today we're going to talk about heat!"

The Waukee YMCA has teamed with Mad Science of Central Iowa for the first Mad Science day camp June 27 to July 1.

The YMCA has not offered a science camp in the past because they have not had staff with proper training, Danae Laughery, YMCA childcare director said.

"This is our first ever [science camp]," said Laughery. "We're not scientists."

Because the YMCA has not had a science camp in the past, they had not been looking for an instructor. As it turns out,



Waukee Today photos by Elizabeth Martin
Angelica Gonzalez learns about heat as she uses the warmth of her hand to heat liquid in the meter, causing it to rise. Below: Matt Bentley enjoys cotton candy made by the "Mad Scientist." Campers saw how heat is used to turn sugar into cotton candy.

they didn't have to.

"Mad Science approached us," said Laughery. "They came out to see if they could do some promotions. [Since then] they have done a lot of early outs, no-school days, and winter and spring break activities with us."

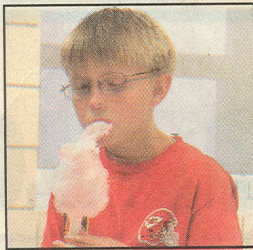
Laughery said after some experience with the company, the metro office "thought it would be great to put science

in the curriculum base."

The "Mad Scientist" spends three hours with the kids in the morning presenting and demonstrating various science lessons and then provides lessons for the rest of the day.

"They even provide curriculum in the afternoon so we don't have to come up with our own, because we wouldn't be

SCIENCE please see page A2



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Science: Camp teaches kids

Continued from page A1

very good at it," said Laughery. "We just go and get the supplies. It's really easy."

Mad Science is based in Montreal and the central Iowa franchise has been operating since September 2004. They have four presenters and the motto "have science, will travel."

"We will go everywhere from a day camp, to birthday parties for 10 or 12, to after school education programs," said 'Mad Scientist' presenter Dan Chase. "We have 27 or 30 different kits that we draw all of our materials from."

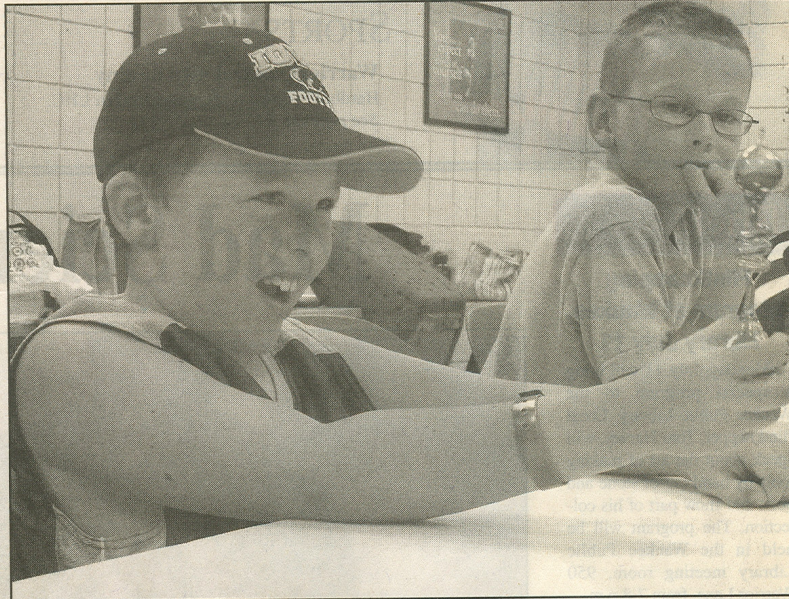
Kits cover a variety of topics and have names such as "harnessing heat," "watts up," "sonic sounds," and "tantalizing tastes."

The program is designed to educate while entertaining.

"We think science education for kids ought to be fun," said Chase. "It ought to have the real solid core curriculum but have a high energy approach to that so they almost don't realize that they're being taught. They come out of it with a good, solid fact-based education."

Tuesday's topic was heat and, after demonstrating different properties of heat, the program embraced more of the entertainment side by showing the kids how heat was used to make cotton candy.

With a name like "Mad



Waukee Today photo by Elizabeth Martin
Mad Science camper Jacob Herrera makes fluid in this meter boil with nothing but the heat from his hand while Alex Hewitt looks on. Campers were encouraged to experiment to see what would make the liquid boil fastest.

Science," a high energy approach is almost expected.

"We do tend to be a little wild and crazy," said Chase. "That's what we do best."

YMCA camp counselor Jodi Ayers agreed.

"He doesn't slow down the whole time he's here," said Ayers.

Chase is a music teacher and is involved in theater. When he

went looking for a part-time job, Mad Science seemed like a perfect fit.

"I've been a teacher for over 25 years and I was looking for something to do part-time," said Chase. "I'm also a theater person, so the acting, the high energy, being on stage and memorizing scripts fits right in."

Chase is not a science

teacher, but that hasn't slowed him down.

"I'm a music teacher, not a science teacher, but science has always been a hobby," said Chase. "Science has always been fun."

The Waukee YMCA will be holding another "Mad Science" camp July 11-15 and still has some openings. For more information call 987-9996.