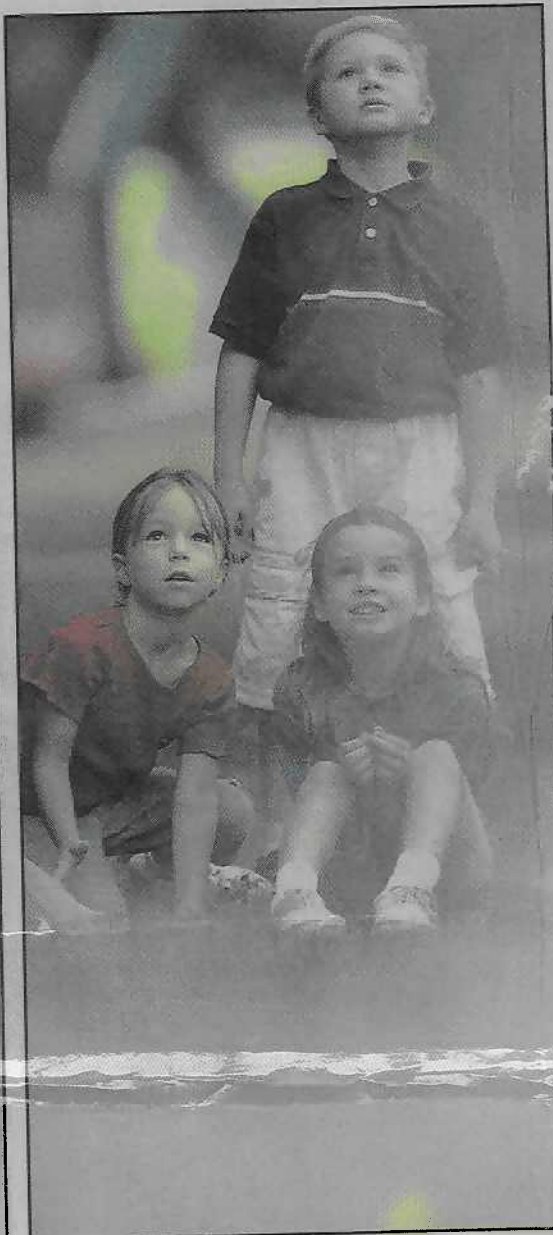
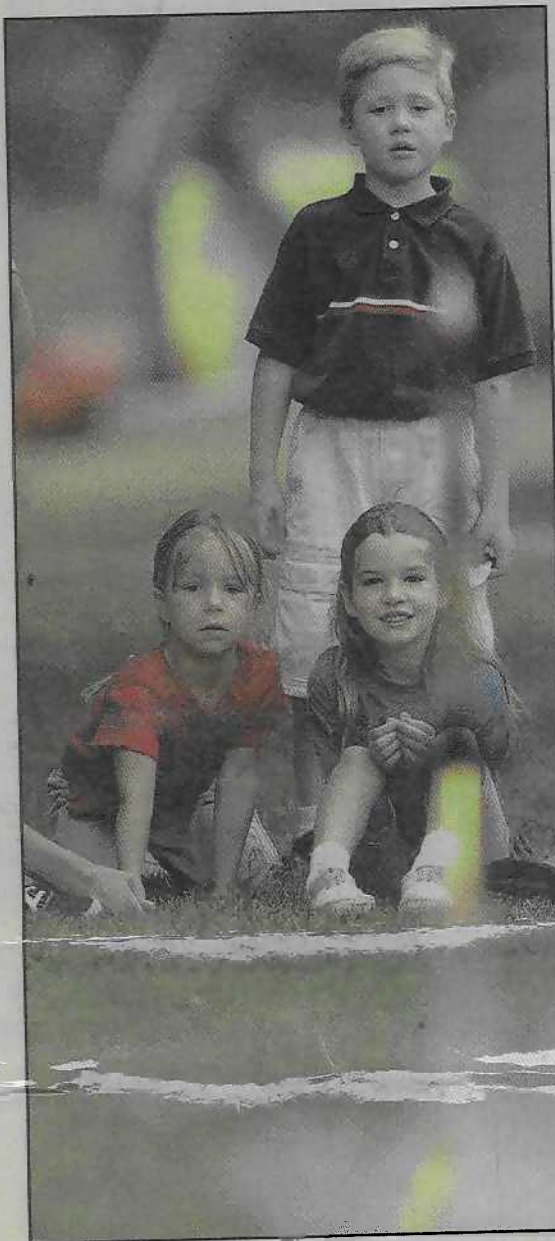


A real blast at summer camp



Randy Pomaro—Chronicle photo staff

Peyton Gammicchia, standing, of Sugar Grove and Stephanie Smick, left, of Oswego watch as Audra Stapella of St. Charles launches a rocket Friday at a "Stars and Space" lesson at the weeklong Young Scholars camp program for gifted children.

Rocket class gives children a lift

By ERIC SCHELKOPF
Kane County Chronicle

NORTH AURORA — Four-year-old Zach Butcher glanced at the sky as he and his fellow classmates began the countdown — "10, 9, 8, 7..."

When they got to "blast off," they had expected the rocket to soar into space.

Nothing happened.

"If you're working at NASA today, this could happen," instructor Karen Anderson told the students, visibly disappointed the rocket stayed on the launch pad.

The group of 4 to 8-year-olds were learning about rockets and space Friday as part of the

"Stars and Space" Young Scholars program at Aurora University. The program puts an emphasis on science, math and technology.

Butcher, of North Aurora, knew what was wrong.

"The light bulb wasn't on. If the light goes on, it blasts off," he said.

Sure enough, a few tries later, the light went on and the rocket went up.

"Whoa, there it goes," one student exclaimed. "I saw it, too," another chimed in.

Butcher has been learning about our solar system this week.

"I learned that Pluto is a big ice cube, and that the sun is just a big star," Butcher said

proudly.

Seven-year-old Andrew Alonso-Emanuel also learned more about the different planets.

"I never knew that Pluto and Neptune crossed over when going into orbit," Alonso-Emanuel said.

For the last two weeks, youngsters have been watching rockets blast into space, exploring Devil's Cave in North Aurora and dissecting sheep eyeballs and frogs.

"We cover topics not typically covered in the classroom, in-depth," said Ann Butcher, director of the Young Scholars program.

Butcher herself was pleased at what her son,

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