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Camp lets hearing-impaired kids use skills

U of L program organizes activities

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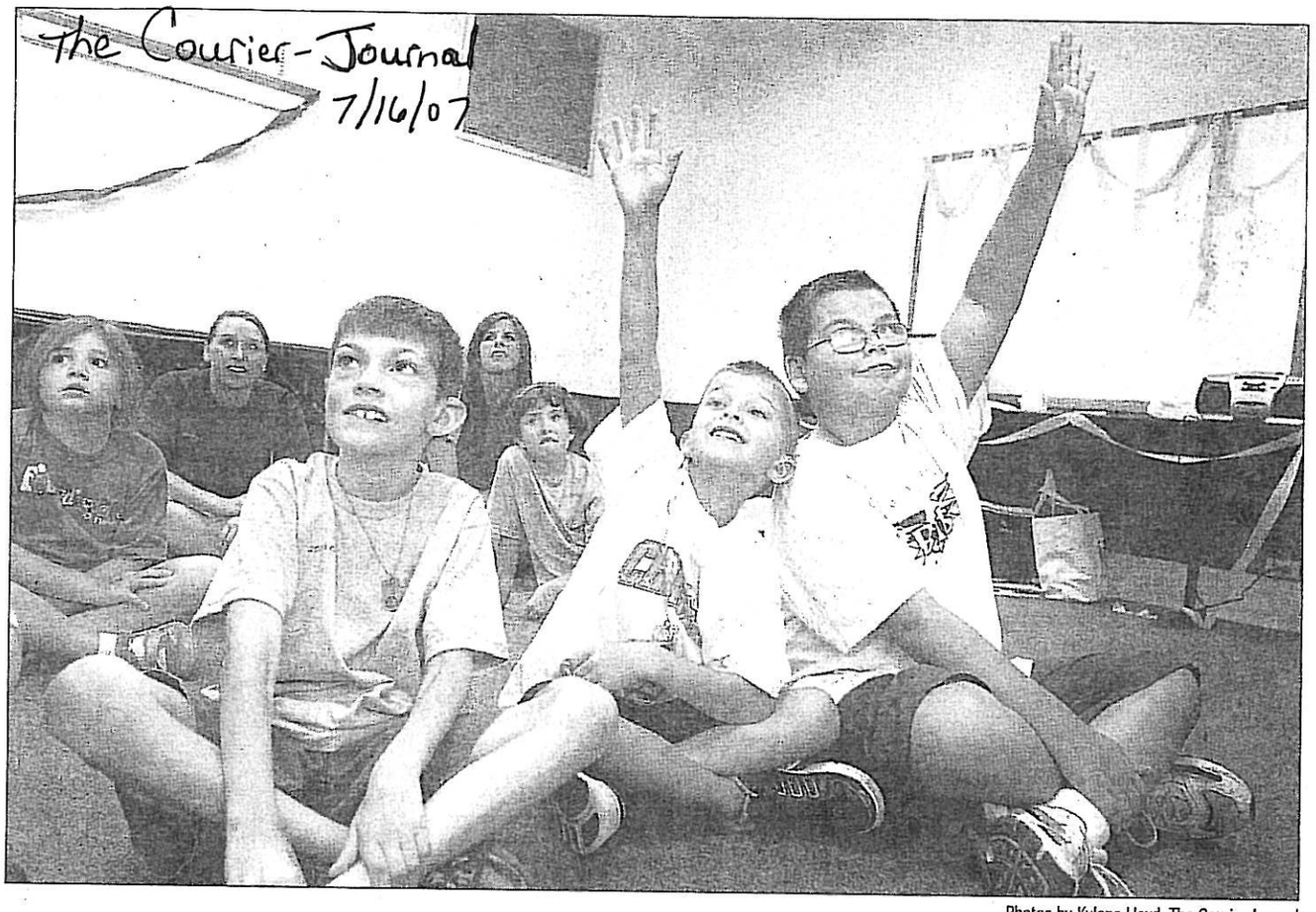

Photos by Kylene Lloyd, The Courier-Journal

Campers, foreground from left, Nathan French, Jason Kidwell and Austin Clark participated in "Hear Here" activities. The annual summer day camp is for hearing-impaired children ages 4-10 and is organized by doctoral students in the University of Louisville's audiology program.

Emma Proietti said she was the only student at Highlands Latin School last year who had a cochlear implant to help her hear.

"It's annoying when kids always say, 'What's that thing on your head,' " Emma, 8, said.

But last week, Emma didn't have to deal with that. She spent the week at a camp for children who have hearing aids or cochlear implants — an electronic device that provides sound to those who are deaf or severely hard-of-hearing.

The "Hear Here" camp was organized by the University of Louisville's audiology program and gave children who are hearing-impaired a chance to socialize with their peers.

Children ages 4 to 6 came in the morning, while 7- to 10-year-olds came in the afternoon.

"This is an opportunity for them to interact with kids with hearing loss and see them in everyday life," said Aynsley Weddle, who is a doctoral student in U of L's program.

Doctoral students guided the children through games that allowed them to use their hearing skills. Students also painted, belly danced and played musical instruments.

"It's a lot of fun," said Jason Kidwell, 8, who attends Audubon Elementary School. "I love the games."

Jason said he's one of three students at his school with cochlear implants.

Recently, a group of nine children played a game where a child would stand in the middle of a circle and tell everyone with certain traits, such as blue shirts or tennis shoes, to switch spots.

The game allowed the children to use their hearing skills while having fun.

Last Tuesday, a musician played different instruments, including the drums, piano and guitar, for the children, who made tambourines to play along with him.

On the last day of the camp, students held a talent show for their parents.

Emma said she made many friends and had a lot of fun.

"There are lots of people who have cochlear implants here," she said. "I feel like I'm at home."

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Tyler Robinson helped Emma Hovanec with a drawing. Children also played games, painted, belly danced and played musical instruments during the camp.