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## The Republican.

### Band program strikes a chord

Sunday, August 05, 2007

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WESTFIELD - Before joining a summer band program, Chancellor Tang, a 7-year-old guitar player from Southwick, who started playing in April, knew a couple of chords.

In two weeks at South Middle School, he learned another six chords.

"He knows all the chords in the songs now," said Luke R. Baillargeon, the school's band director and one of the teachers who worked with about 50 local children during a two-week session, which ended last week.

"I like playing the guitar," said Chancellor, the youngest member of the camp.

The program is an addition to a popular Dan Kane Singers summer program that was offered this year for the fifth season at Westfield North Middle School, attracting over 160 children.

Each of the programs had six different music teachers and a number of activities for the children not only to learn but to have fun as well.

During the band program, children played music from radio, or TV or movies while sharpening their musical skills.

"It was an outstanding experience," said Daniel J. Kane, who has been working with the Dan Kane Singers for three decades.

"I think the most outstanding thing is that you take 50 kids - most of whom do not know each other and who come from several different schools and several different towns - and in two weeks you try to form them into one voice, one band. It's not an easy accomplishment," he said.

For Baillargeon, the biggest challenge was the age level.

"Our youngest student is 7 years old, our oldest one is 15 years old, but our staff and teachers were able to accommodate this age group. And they are, probably, the best players in Western Massachusetts."

Baillargeon was "very satisfied with the results."

"The students have made a lot of growth playing in large and small groups and solo as well," he said.

His wife, Natalya Baillargeon, a teacher from Southwick's elementary school who helped to run the summer music camp at South Middle, said that by the end of the program "the kids really come together doing a fabulous job."

"Some of these students are from my school. Chancellor is one of my students. I think he's doing a great

job. He's really grown a lot this week," she said.

Sam Burke, a 13-year-old trumpet player from Westfield, said he attended another band program before, but liked the Westfield version much better.

"I like the Dixieland part of the program especially," he said.

Sevane A. Khatchadourian, 13, also of Westfield, has been playing saxophone for a couple of years.

"I like all the special attention that we got from the teachers and how I've progressed so much in two weeks," she said.

Both will "definitely" join the program next summer.

"Next year, we are going to develop it, grow it and eventually make Westfield a destination for music programs in general," Kane said.

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