

PARENTING

New summer camps offer nontraditional activities

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

ROCHESTER — Chaz Hearne pointed with obvious pride to a mask in the basement of the School of the Arts.

"It's anger," explained the 11-year-old from Webster.

Chaz had made the "emotion mask." Mask-making was one of many projects he and 40 other youths enjoyed during a three-week Summer Camp Playhouse — among the growing number of nontraditional summer camps in the Rochester Diocese area.

The camp is the first of three the Rochester Children's Theatre is offering at the school this summer for ages 8-13. It focuses on a Native American theme (upcoming sessions will feature other themes). In addition to such craft activities as making masks, rattles and drums, the campers also take part in theater games, and create original plays based on Iroquois stories. Those plays are scheduled for a public performance at 7:30 p.m. July 16.

"They make it as easy as possible for us, but it's still really challenging," acknowledged camper Emily Crouch, 13, of Honeoye Falls.

Chaz has attended the camp two years now, "because I really like to act."

Emily, who hopes to be in the school play at Honeoye Falls Middle School this fall, is using the camp experience to learn such acting skills as how to project her voice and how to move onstage.

She said she's enjoying the camp more than others that focused on more traditional summer recreational activities.

"I think the other camps didn't give me

a chance to let go," she said.

Chaz and Emily are among a number of young people taking advantage of nontraditional camps that allow youths to explore such areas as music, science, nature and aeronautics, as well as theater.

This diversity of camp offerings suits the changing needs of children, according to Molly Vasey, public relations coordinator for Rochester's Hochstein Music School.

"I think kids today are more interested in learning a little bit of everything, rather than focusing on one interest," she said.

To meet some of those varied interests, Hochstein, which has traditionally offered only music camps, this year is including "Arts in Action" camps. The half-day (for ages 4-8) and full-day (ages 5-10) camps combine music, movement, storytelling, dramatic presentations and the visual arts.

"I think that kids today are exposed to a lot of things at a younger age," Vasey said. "I think parents are looking at things to stimulate the interest, to help them to grow."

The Rochester Children's Theatre created its summer program because parents were searching for something more for their children, noted Adele Fico, public relations director for the theater. The camp is coordinated by Freyda Schneider.

"We get so many phone calls on a weekly basis, 'What can I do with my kids?'" Fico said.

Terry Martinez spotted this desire for alternative summer camp fare six years ago.

"I had read about different kinds of camps that were just taking off," she said.

So Martinez created Girl Quest. Operating out of Wells College in Aurora, "the entire program is designed with a girls-cen-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Above, Alexander Kasper-Shaw, 9, left, and Michael Callan, 8, rehearse a skit during Rochester Children's Theatre Summer Camp Playhouse July 1 at School of the Arts, Prince Street, Rochester. Below, Johanna Brown, 11, right, and Elizabeth Levy, 10, create pasta-filled rattlers called "rhythm machines."

tered focus," she explained. The program includes typical summer camp activities, but the girls — in seventh through tenth grade — also take part in activities that promote self-esteem and self-awareness.

In addition to the three Girl Quest sessions, Martinez is also offering a performing arts camp for girls Aug. 1-7. Working with the musical, "Annie," the girls will be researching the time period, designing costumes, rehearsing songs and dance routines, and then staging a partial performance of the play.

The Rochester Museum and Science Center is also offering a theater camp this year for the first time. But despite its newness, the program already has a waiting list. So, too, does the museum's technology summer camp.

The museum does have openings in its Day Camp (ages 8-11) and Junior Naturalist Camp (ages 7-9). In the former, the campers take part in hands-on science experiences — including building robots — and in the latter they study the wildlife and plant life around the museum.

With such variety available, what about traditional camps?

Chaz's mother, Julie Cicora, said her



son so enjoyed his experiences at the Children's Theatre camp last year that he wanted to return this year — and to forgo the traditional summer camp he'd attended in the past.

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Events

☉ **THU, JULY 15** — Outdoor movie: "Mighty Joe Young"; dusk (approximately 9 p.m.); Seneca Park Zoomobile, 8 p.m.; Highland Bowl, South Avenue; free; 716/256-4958.

☉ **FRI, JULY 16** — Campfire Tales: for all ages, 8-9 p.m.; Mendon Ponds Park Nature Center, 3914 Clover St., Honeoye Falls; \$2/individual, \$6/family; bring blankets, own snack; 716/334-3780.

☉ **SAT, JULY 17** — Ferns: for ages 10 and up; 9-11 a.m.; Mendon Ponds Park Nature Center, 3914 Clover St., Honeoye Falls; \$2 per individual, \$6 per family; 716/334-3780.

☉ **SUN, JULY 18** — Butterfly Spotting Day: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; Cumming Nature Center, 647 Gulick Rd., Naples; adults \$4, seniors \$3, students K-12 \$1.50, RMSC members, preschoolers free.

☉ **JULY 19-23, 26-30, AUG. 2-6, 9-13** — Ecology workshops: grades 1-6; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Tanglewood Nature Center, Runey Education Building, 246 West Hill Rd., Elmira; call 607/732-6060.

☉ **TUE, JULY 20** — Wild Wings: birds of prey; Irondequoit Public Library, 45 Cooper Rd.; 1:30 p.m.;

grade 4 and up; free; 716/336-6062.

☉ **WED, JULY 21** — Ventriloquist: Evie and Company (Cuddles, Snuggles and Tina); 7 p.m.; Henrietta Public Library, 455 Calkins Rd.; for children 5 and older; free; 716/359-7092.

■ **JULY 21-23, 28-30, AUG. 4-6** — Day Camp for Chickadees: for grades K-3; 9 a.m.-noon July 21-23 and 28-30, 1-4 p.m. Aug. 4-6; Mendon Ponds Park Nature Center, 3914 Clover St., Honeoye Falls; for cost, to preregister (required), call 716/334-3780.

■ **AUG. 1-7** — Arts camp: for girls in grades 6-12; theater, dance, music; also Girl Quest, July 18-25, July 25-31, Aug. 1-7; \$450; Wells College, Aurora; 315-364-3441.

■ **Summer camps:** RMSC Day Camp (ages 8-11, July 26-30, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.), RMSC Junior Naturalist Camp (ages 7-9, Aug. 9-13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.); Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; for information or to register, call 271-4552, ext. 342.

■ **JULY 19-AUG. 6, AUG. 9-27** — Summer Camp Playhouse: Rochester Children's Theatre, The School of the Arts, 45 Prince St., Rochester; 716/271-7870.