

# Kids and counselors hit it off

## Backyard fun in the summertime

The hand-painted sign on the backyard tree says "Welcome to Kiddie Camp."

The kiddies that the camp welcomes can be anywhere from 6-20 neighborhood youngsters on any given camp day throughout the summer.

Kiddie Camp has been running for three summers now, a boon to mothers in the 13 Mile and Drake roads area, say the three young entrepreneurs who run the backyard operation.

The camp staff this year is composed of 15-year-old Michelle Esper, 11-year-

old Tracy Groves and 13-year-old Anjee Baluja.

The neighborhood babysitters who run the camp have come, gone and been replaced, but Tracy says the mother-clients let the girls know long in advance of summer that they hope the camp will continue.

Once handled by gathering up tots to take for an afternoon together in Woodland Trails subdivision's park, the camp gets more sophisticated each summer, Tracy said.

Every evening before Tuesday and

Thursday camp days, the three staffers, have a planning session to map out the next day's agenda for crafts, games, walks or maybe running through the sprinkler.

The staffers have put on skits for the campers and sometimes the campers will put on a skit for the staff.

On the day we visited, tots from 2-7 years were tearing up newspapers, blowing up balloons, and up to their elbows in paste putting together a pinata.

"Sometimes the hard part is knowing how many to prepare for," Anjee said.

"We have 21 (potential campers) on our list, but 20 is the most we've had at any one day. And sometimes they don't stay all day."

Mothers drop the campers off in the morning with lunch boxes and instructions for when they want the camper home. It's the staff's job to deliver the tot back on time.

Kiddie Camp closes down for the season when Michelle goes back to North Farmington High School, Anjee enters North Farmington and Tracy returns to classes in Dunckel Middle School.



A wide-eyed Jason Kircos looks as though he's been roused out of bed and brought to camp earlier than he would have liked.



Michelle Esper, 15, and Tracy Groves, 11, double as playwrights and actresses.



Running a kids' camp has kept a smile on Anjee Baluja's face this summer. The 13-year-old enters North Farmington High School this fall.



Tracy Groves will have lots to tell her classmates about hiring yourself for a summer job when school reopens at Dunckel Junior High School.



Carly Kaufman, 1, would like an explanation from her big brother, Josh, 3½ about what's going on.



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