

# The ADVOCATE

Stamford, CT  
July 24, 2009  
Circulation: 25,626

## Stamford campers launch their handmade rockets

By Olivia Just

STAMFORD -- Like a group of NASA technicians-in-training, the children launched their rockets from a safe distance.

Over the field at Stillmeadow Elementary School on Friday, the small fleet burst into the air with surprising speed, trailing a wisp of smoke. Watching the handmade spacecraft fall gracefully to Earth, the crowd burst into applause.

The launch is a hallmark activity for campers in kindergarten through fifth grade at Champions Science Adventures camp, a seven-week educational program that builds on students' knowledge of science, from planetary motion to basic physics. Each week brings a different science-based theme with various hands-on activities, but space and rocketry week is by far the favorite, said Robby Pletz, area manager of Knowledge Learning Corporation School Partnerships, the company responsible for the program.

"We teach them the basic science concepts, what they've been learning in school, and build on that with hands-on activities," he said. "The space and rocketry is really the flagship program, the one we build our summer around."

The rockets in question are fairly simple to construct, usually from a toy store or hobby shop, Pletz said. As the rockets they built soared into the clear summer sky, the children craned their necks to watch the craft make the descending arc onto the grass. The thrill, however, was brief; the launch lasts a few precious seconds.

"I love seeing the kids' reaction when they finish a toy or a project," staff member Sarah Mallozza said as the rocket launch came to a close. "They're learning something, which is wonderful."

Kids to the moon



Campers in the Champions Science Adventures summer camp launch rockets on Friday they made at Stillmeadow Elementary School in Stamford.



A camper holds one of the rockets made at the Champions Science Adventures camp. The space and rocketry week is the highlight for campers in the program, said Robby Pletz, area manager of Knowledge Learning Corporation School Partnerships.