



WITH BAT IN HAND, Tim Breth (above) hit balls into the field so his team, sponsored by Ward Drug Store, could practice fielding them. At home plate, Madison Macfee (left) held her bat on her shoulder waiting for the first pitch of a T-ball game last Tuesday.

Youngsters enjoy summer and baseball

The sun beat down as the first pitch flew over the plate.

The boy swung his bat, missing. A strike. On the second pitch, though, he hit the ball into the outfield. The kid took off in full sprint to first base.

It was Tuesday night, time for kids' baseball. On the big field, the Little League teams were playing. On the little field, T-ball players were ready to start.

Before their start, T-ball players played in the dirt and gravel in the infield while parents sat in lawn chairs waiting for the game to start. As things got under way, the volunteer coaches organized their kids.

On one side, kids lined up on a little bench. That was the batting order. While that was going on, the other team was on the field. Coaches placed kids at first, second and third base, at shortstop, in the infield and sorta in the outfield.

The first pitch was thrown and the game was off.

Parents cheered their kids on as they tried to hit the ball off the pitcher or the stand.

Through the Decatur County Recreation program, parents can sign their kids up to play ball for most of the sum-

mer. Their age determines which group they fall into.

T-ball is for kids age 4 through kindergarten. In T-ball, they first get a chance to hit a pitch off the coach. If they can't hit the thrown ball, they can try to hit it off the stand, or tee.

Little League is for youngsters in first through third grade. The coach pitches.

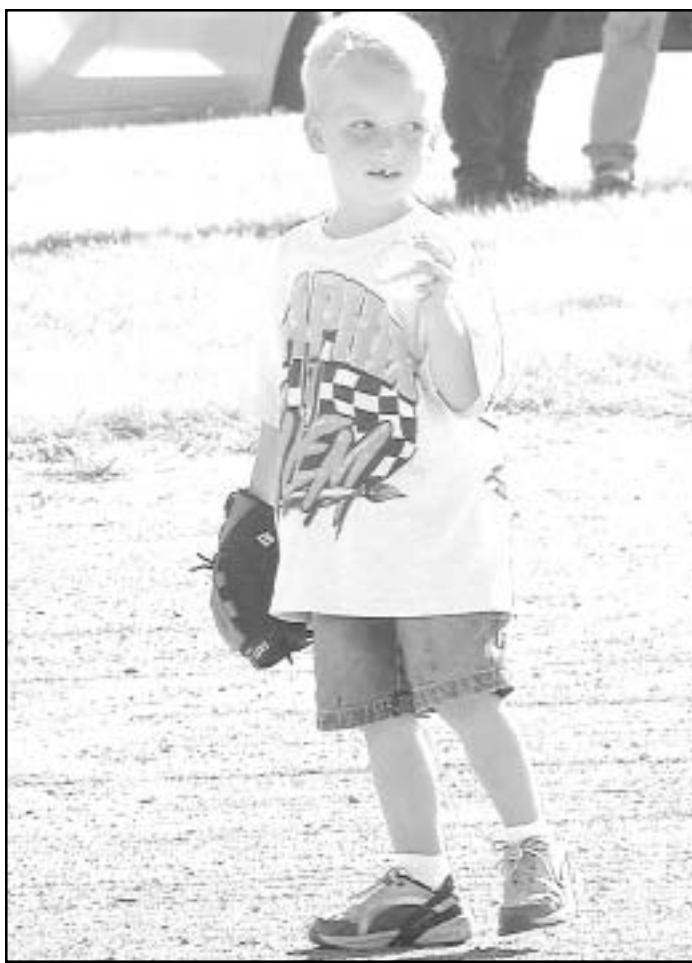
Pony baseball is for boys in the fourth through sixth grades. The older kids play fast pitch.

Girls from fourth to eighth grade can play Bantam softball.

Each year at the end of school, notices are sent out. Parents have to sign up their children by May 14. For \$10 each, they are signed up on a team, then either the sponsor or parent pays for a team T-shirt.

For the most part, the kids' season is over with the exception of a tournament in Little League which was to start at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday with First National and A & W playing and at 7:30 p.m. The Bank was to play Ward Drug Store.

Winners of the two games were to play at 8:30 p.m.



AT TOPSPEED, a Ward Drug Store player (top) ran to third base. Gary Juenemann, (above) who helps coach the First National Bank team, helped Kariah Castle warm up before the game started. Kade Grafel (left) practiced before his T-ball game.

Photos by Kimberly Brandt