



**AT HOME PLATE**, Reece Grafel (above) swung the bat, making off for first base after he hit the ball. Each player had more than one contact with the ball. Mason Urban (below) dropped the bat and took chance at bat.



## Youngsters learn basics of American past time

She stepped up to the plate wearing a hard helmet, long T-shirt and a bright blue skirt.

The little girl took her stance, with the long metal bat on her shoulder. She took a swing – and missed. The coach pitched the ball again – and again she missed.

By the third or fourth pitch she made contact with the ball, sending it sailing through the air, and she took off to first base.

The outfielders, all with their leather mitts, took off after the ball. Four, five and six kids tried their hand at fielding the ball while parents, grandparents, family friends and others cheered them on from the packed stands.

That's right, it's T-ball season.

Tuesday nights, the T-ball teams take to the small ball diamond on the east side of town to learn how to hit, catch and field the ball.

No one keeps score, at least not officially, in a T-ball game. Often the kids have more than three chances to hit the ball off a pitch from the coach. If they can't, a tee is brought out, the ball placed on top and the player gets to hit it.

Some players run the bases by themselves while others hold the hand of a coach and run.

Joe Dreher, Decatur County summer recreation director, oversees the program, but each T-ball team has



**IN THE OUTFIELD** at a T-ball game, Moraiah Carman kicked her leg in the air while she waited for the play.

several adult volunteer coaches. Most have a kid on the team.

The five teams this year are sponsored by Raye's Grocery, Fredrickson Insurance, Ron's Applying

Service, R&M Service Center and the Re-Load. Each player gets a T-shirt with their team name on the front.

At the end of the game, the kids, about 10 to a team, line up to give high fives to the other team, each other, the coaches and parents. Then everybody gets a treat – cookies, fruit, juice, whatever the mothers brought – and the place clears out as kids and families scatter for home.



**NEXT TO A BASE**, fielder Kennedy Jensen knelt down waiting for the ball. Brad Uehlin (right) helped Lillian Rippe bat.

