



TOSSING SOME PANDAS, Aspen Gallentine (left) and Kelli Bryan were among the students at PandaMania, the community Vacation Bible School sponsored last week by Oberlin churches.

Kids learn Bible stories in darkened belly of whale

Crafts, stories, fun fill week for class

The kids squeezed together, sitting shoulder to shoulder with their legs folded.

It was dark inside the big black creature, although some blue twinkle lights lit the way. The kids sat in the belly of the whale as they waited for storytellers to explain about Jonah and the whale.

Pastor Linda Willey of the United Methodist Church and volunteer Cindy Shirley were the storytellers for the week of Vacation Bible School, held at the Oberlin United Church.

Melanie Anderson, secretary at the Methodist Church, said they averaged around 60 to 65 kids for the classes, which started last Tuesday and ran through Friday. The grade-school kids did five activities each day, she said.

Besides the story, they also watched a video about the day's lesson, said Mrs. Anderson.

Pastor Sharon Nelson of the Oberlin Covenant Church did an outside game with the kids, using a large colorful parachute loaded with stuffed panda bears. The kids would toss the parachute up in the air, holding onto the edges while the stuffed

bears flew up, then caught them.

The theme of the week was PandaMania.

The kids also did a craft project every day, coloring bags and 3D glasses. The project went along with the story for the day, said Ms. Anderson. They had a snack every day too.

On Friday, the kids invited their parents for a picnic. They told about the lessons and sang some of the songs.

The meat for the picnic, said Ms. Anderson, was provided by the Decatur County Ministerial Alliance.

"It was a great week," she said. "The kids were enthused about everything and were listening and learning."

Some of the kids even asked if they could come back on Saturday, she added.

Each day, the kids brought change for a "noisy offering." They brought pennies the first day, then nickels, dimes and quarters. Ms. Anderson said they haven't yet counted the coins, but whatever was raised will go to the House of Hope orphanage in Haiti.



CALISTA ISBELL (above) was among the students "swallowed" into the belly of a whale to hear volunteer Cindy Shirley read the Bible story of Jonah last week at the Oberlin United Church. Gage Scott (below) colored a set of 3-D glasses during craft time one day.



MADISON FICK (below) showed off her 3-D glasses at Vacation Bible School last week. Pastor Judi Strecker of the United Church (above) got snacks ready for the kids.

