

# THE STANDARD BANNER

The newspaper for Jefferson County, Tennessee



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Thursday, July 28, 2011



## 'Cool in the Furnace'

Worship Through The Arts Camp at First United Methodist Church in Jefferson City concluded a busy week with a rousing finale by the fifty children who participated in the program. The musical told the story of Daniel and his three friends, Rack, Shack and Benny and King Nebuchadnezzar. It was directed by choral director Laura Ritter and her staff of volunteers. (Staff photo - Ronnie Housley)

## Worship Through the Arts camp engages 50 children

BY LEANNE FULLER  
Standard Banner Reporter

Area children engaged in some creative fun last week at First United Methodist Church of Jefferson City in the church's first ever Worship Through the Arts camp.

The weeklong camp, which was free to all rising first through sixth graders, was designed to teach Bible lessons and worship through music, drama, movement and art.

Children participated in a musical called "It's Cool in the Furnace," about the Biblical tale of Shadrach, Meshach and

Abednego and did arts and crafts that went along with the themes of the story.

The 51 children sang and performed motions in the musical. Some of the kids acted and others played instruments.

Camp director Laura Ritter has run a similar camp at First United Methodist in Morristown for nine years.

Ritter, who is an associate professor of music at Walters State Community College, emphasizes the importance of free music and art programs for kids.

She explained how the arts were used to teach lessons about

trusting God and doing what is right instead of following the crowd.

"Tuesday it was about protection ... The teacher had six kids come out in costume and each thing that they had on was protection. One child had on a football helmet and one had on gloves and a scarf ... and one had an umbrella

"And so she gave the parallel that we use all these things to protect ourselves but nobody can protect themselves in a furnace and so the boys needed God's protection," Ritter said.

The children really enjoyed the camp as well. Ritter says



### Finishing touches

Ramsey Martin adds a few more flames to her brick for the fiery furnace during Arts Camp at First United Methodist Church.

that some of the kids had solos in the musical and after the first day of learning their parts they went home and memorized them in one day, something her adult students rarely do.

Kids from all backgrounds have enjoyed participating in the camp - disabled and able-bodied - as well as children for whom English is a second language.

"It's not all children that everything goes well for them," Ritter said, "I think that's important, to encourage children with any kind of learning disability or handicap to come and participate in stuff like this."