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## St. Francis preschoolers go gaga for yoga

By Sara Cunningham  
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The students at St. Francis Preschool were trying out a few yoga poses, and 3-year-old Donovan Schmidt was really getting into it.

Following instructor Mary Lynne Chambers' lead, Donovan moved his arms and legs into the "mountain," "sunrise, sunset," and "gorilla" poses. But the "airplane" pose was his favorite.

"It was fun," Donovan said, jumping up and down in place as he talked. "It was hard."

Getting to work with Chambers, who owns Ayus Yoga & Ayurveda Center in Prospect, was just part of the tots' two-week-long summer adventure into everything related to earth and its cultures.

For 15 years, St. Francis Preschool has been offering themed summer day camps for children from 2 years old to rising first-graders, and this particular theme, "Earth Trek," covered everything from landforms and maps to singing songs and working on art projects related to other parts of the world.

Yoga was a big part of the activities because it ties in culture, body awareness and physical activity, explained Laura Shaughnessy-Day, the administrative assistant for the preschool.

Teachers used a set of cards called "Yoga Planet," which have activities and poses on them. The deck was created by Tara Guber, Leah Kalish and Sophie Fatus.

"Those are all big concepts we introduce with preschool kids," Shaughnessy-Day said. "Yoga is very much about teaching yourself to be grounded in the here and now, and to be close to nature and the earth."

Chambers said she occasionally teaches classes to children as young as 4 at her studio.

"Kids are much more aware these days and so it's not so strange that they would be into trying yoga," she said. "It actually helps many children with anxiety and helps them sleep better at night."

That being said, Chambers said she changes things a bit for her younger students to hold their attention.

While working with the St. Francis students, she added things like transitioning from the "airplane" pose, where you stand on one leg with your arms stretched out to the sides and slowly lean forward to balance, to asking the kids to become airplanes and zoom around the room.

"You know, it's for fun so you just got to go with the flow," Chambers said, laughing.

Reporter Sara Cunningham can be reached at (502) 582-4335.

**COVER PHOTO:** Lucy Frederick, 4, left, and Sophie O'Driscoll, 5, try yoga moves with Mary Lynne Chambers.

## Additional Facts

To learn more

For more information about future St. Francis Preschool summer camps, contact the school at 228-0165.

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