

READING GRADE 6

A. Article

Sixth-Grade Band Plays at Children's Hospital

"We looked forward to that for weeks," said Estrella Castañeda, staff member at Northeast Children's Hospital in Fairbanks. Castañeda was talking about the spring concert at the hospital this past Thursday. Twenty-four sixth-grade students from the nearby Baker School played lively songs and handed out cookies and stickers to the children and staff in attendance.

The band had been planning the concert for the past three weeks, after one of their members, Mickey Simons, was injured in a car accident. Classmates visiting Simons decided that bringing their musical talent to the hospital would be a worthwhile and rewarding way to cheer up their friend and other patients. Plans were put in place right away.

Band members Alison Parker and Michael Strom arrived at the hospital's fifth-floor meeting room early Thursday morning. "Our job was to get the area organized," said Strom. "From talking with the

hospital staff early in our planning, we knew that some of the children would be wheeled into the room in wheelchairs. Some would be in their beds. We had to clear enough space for all of the spectators and for our band instruments. It turned out that some parents attended, too. The meeting room is not very large, so it took some organizing on everyone's part."

Planning the concert was well worth the time, according to those who attended. "I enjoyed listening to the songs played by the band," said John York, a patient at Northeast. "We were all singing together. It was fun. I hope they come back again."

Band students are planning a return engagement before the end of the school year. "Many of the kids in the hospital are our own age," said Tamara Johnson, a band member. "We enjoy making them happy," Parker agreed. "I was so happy to see them clapping and smiling. It was probably the best thing I have done in a long time."