



Independent / Courtesy Amanda Halsey

Singer/songwriter Lily Spellman, 9, took center stage as she performed at Rock Camp this summer.

Kids Rock Out At Rock Camp

By Lisa Finn

The crowd cheering and clapping in Westhampton Beach on Monday night could very well have been welcoming a headliner rock band. But when the group stepped up and started to play, it was clear that the group was different than any other on tour this summer – instead of weathered superstars taking the stage for yet another stop on their summer concert circuit, the group was comprised of a fresh-faced group of enthusiastic kids.

Forget macramé and s'mores: This year, for the second summer, Rock Star Band Camp offered kids the chance to participate in a unique music performance program last week. Kids who live to sing and rock out spent last week writing and rehearsing their own original songs on the grounds of Squiretown Park in Hampton Bays.

And that's not all: After working together for a week, the kids, performing in a real rock band, took to the stage in Westhampton Beach on Monday and Regulars Café in Southampton last night, showcasing their talents for a live audience.

Rock Camp was sponsored by the Town of Southampton 's parks and recreation department. "I just thought it was a wonderful experience," said Kimberly Charos, whose daughter, Lily Spellman, is an aspiring singer and songwriter. "Lily loves to sing, and it was nice for her to have this opportunity. The kids had a lot of fun when they performed live in Westhampton. It was nice to see them working together, collaborating and brainstorming."

Next up this summer is Recording Camp: Hamptons , featuring Joey Hanna of Thunderhoof Productions. The camp will take place on August 5 from 10 to 6. Hanna is a musician and producer, and a touring musician with Carrie Underwood and Gavin DeGraw.

At the camp, Hanna will work with kids to write and record original songs and film a music video. Rock Star Band Camp was founded by New York singer/songwriter and producer Amanda Halsey, who hopes to nurture students, encouraging them to celebrate themselves and create original music.

Watching kids reach their potential is exhilarating for Halsey, who said the best part of the experience for her is watching the actual performance. At Monday's Westhampton event, a crowd of almost 150 gathered to watch the new rock band perform live. "The way the crowd reacted to the stage banter and original songs, and the way they cheered, that was the best part, I think. The kids are so young, you don't know if they're actually going to do it once they get on stage, but they came through, and it was so exciting."

"I really thought it was a good experience," said Lily Spellman, 9. "I like to sing and play keyboard so it was fun." Spellman, who loves Miley Cyrus and would like to be a singer one day, was the only girl who attended last week's camp. "It paid off in the end because I got to be the lead singer."

Ryan Maloney, 11, is a young drummer and pianist who participated in last week's program. "It was really cool how we got to perform in Westhampton. Just playing together in the band was really cool, too."

Maloney spent his time at camp honing his skills and learning to "play good beats" along to the guitars and keyboards.

Maloney's tastes in music? "My favorite performers are Guns N' Roses, Aerosmith, the Eagles – basically, all the classic rock men." One day, Maloney would like to follow the paths of his rock legend idols and perform professionally, too.

But for now, he's content to look forward to next summer, when he has plans to head off to Rock Camp again. "You learn a lot there and get to see what it's like to perform. And," he added, "you play with a band."

lfinn@indyeastend.com