The rising popularity of a small-stringed guitar wasn't what prompted Khris Jinks to buy a snow-white ukulele for herself.

And brightly colored ones for both of her sons.

The hook was a sign she saw advertising ukulele lessons at Kittles Music store in North Platte.

"I looked at the kids and asked them 'should we give it try?' " Khris said.

She received a resounding "yes" from elementary-aged sons, Maxwell and Weston.

Wanting to share the anticipated fun with others, Khris contacted a couple of friends with children of similar ages to see if they might want to sign up as well.

Lois Shea said her son, Matthew, took the bait and "I came along for the ride."

So did Jenny Daup, and her children—Maddie and Seth—although Maddy had to rearrange

piano lessons to make it work.

For nine weeks on Wednesday nights, beginning in late September, the mothers and their children would load up in a Suburban or mini-van and head for the ukulele-lesson room above the music store.

“We had a funny teacher,” Seth said. “And he couldn’t sing.”

But the teacher could teach.

And the more they practiced, the more their playing skills improved.

“The kids practiced,” Jenny said with a laugh. “In the beginning, I practiced more.”

Knowing how to play the Hawaiian instrument might be helpful in school plays, Maddie said.

Seth thought his new skill could be used in his Destination Imagination group in which members are given problems to solve competitively using imagination and ingenuity.

Because the ukulele is small, Jenny said she likes its portability.

That made it easier to pack up her kids and three ukuleles and drive to grandma’s house in Broken Bow.

There the three Daups played and sang songs for nursing home residents.

“The residents sang to songs they knew,” Jenny said.

Whether or not the concert was perfect didn’t really matter.

“Most of the residents had hearing aids,” Maddie said.

She added that she liked the fact that ukulele players can’t be made fun of “because it’s such a silly thing to do.”

Maxwell said he thinks ukulele playing is a unique talent.

“Most people can’t play one,” he said.

Manipulating four, instead of six strings on the guitar, is what Khris likes most about the instrument.

“Learning to play the ukulele is easier than I thought,” she said. “And it’s a good start to learning how to play the guitar.”

During lessons, Jenny said they all made mistakes.

“But we’d still go to class and sound horrible and laugh about it,” she said.

Perhaps the best part of the experience, according to the group, was eating at a restaurant before each lesson at a location each child got to choose.

And stopping for ice cream to laugh about the evening’s events before heading for home.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636