'Nutcracker' opens with 110 kids tonight

By DEL McColm

When 110 Davis children showed up to try out for the third annual 'Nutcracker,' they all got in. That's the philosophy of Bob Bowen, City Cultural and Special Activities coordinator, who originated the annual event.

"We are going to accept whoever shows up for rehearsal," he said onstage Monday, their second day in the Veterans' Memorial Theater. "So many groups turn them away when they try out. It's important for this age (5 to 12 year olds) to have their chance in costume onstage in the spotlight. Many have never done anything like this before and I think there's a need for it."

Performing comes naturally to Bowen, 37, who has lived in Davis for 11 years and has performed locally or been involved with Sunshine Children's Theater, the Davis Players, Bad Actors, The Davis Comic Opera Company and West of Broadway. He also taught tap, social and jazz dance at the university and for City Recreation programs for five years while he graduated from UC Davis and began graduate study at California State University, Sacramento.

"Your basic shuffle" is being taught to all the dancers divided into ten groups, he says, including the Sugar Plum, Snowflakes, Mice, Chinese and Russians. Bowen taught the volunteer high school leaders, who are now instructing the dancing teams.

The "Nutcracker" cast has been rehearsing three hours each day all week around town and the show, sponsored by the Davis Parks and Community Services Department, opens tonight at 7 p.m. It will be repeated tomorrow at 2 p.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Theater.

The story is Clara's fantasy after a family Christmas party, including princesses, princes, sugar plum fairies, dancers and mice fights. The cast includes Allison Steele, 11, as Clara; Robby Westergaard, 11, as her brother, Fritz; Sujai Vijayan, 12, as the mother and Tommy Randall, 12, as the father.

Mike Horton, 12, is the toymaker who sets the toys twirling; Nathan Ballard, 10, is the Mouse King and Meghan French, 12, is the Pipaqueak Mouse.

The Sugar Plum Fairy will be portrayed by Angie Edwards, 12, the Nutcracker Prince by Derrick Wydick, 12, and Lara Smith, 12, and Peter Vigil, 12, will be the Queen and King of the Snowflakes. The popular Mother Mar-
Following director Bob Bowen's lead, 10 groups of dancers will be rehearsing "The Nutcracker," which will be presented Friday at 7 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m. in the Veterans' Memorial Theater. Tickets are $2 for adults, 50 cents for children under 12. Tickets are available at the Davis Parks and Community Services Department.