

THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN

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St. Louis American holds two-week STEM camp for 4–6th graders

The St. Louis American Foundation recently held its fourth annual Summer Science Academy for high-achieving 4th - 6th grade students. The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Camp was held at Little Creek Nature Area in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. Participating students were a part of The St. Louis American's nationally-acclaimed Newspaper in Education program and were nominated by their teachers as a "Science Star," with a high interest and excitement for science. The two-week, intensive summer science program was free to the participating students, through a partnership with the Boeing Company, and featured guest speakers from organizations including the Boeing Company, Endangered Wolf Center, TreeHouse Wildlife Center, Hazelwood West Robotics Team, US Army Corps of Engineers, Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge and others! Participating students experienced two weeks of self-directed research, hands-on lessons, individual and group experiments, engineering projects, indoor and outdoor challenges and environmental education.

Photos By: Wiley Price and Cathy Sewell



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Understanding robotics wiring

Boeing scientist Christina Willis explains airplane building to the young scientists



Creating animals and their habitats



Hands on robotics building

Designing and building spacecraft to withstand the elements of space travel



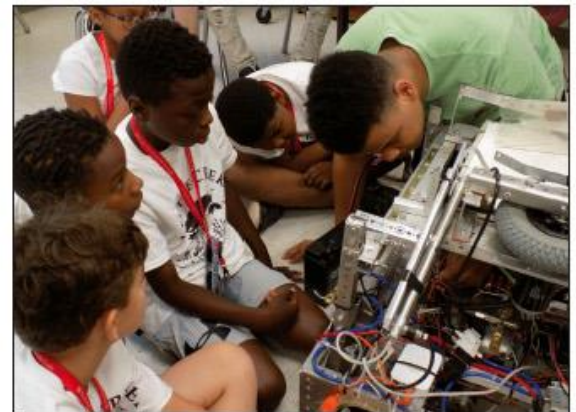
Sharing robotics designs



Building different kinds of habitats



Discovering the many different computer programming languages



Troubleshooting the robot

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Outside of the Classroom



Practicing casting skills



First catch of the day



Dipping for invertebrates with Ranger Bob



Working together to get the canoes in the water



Canoeing at Little Creek Nature Area



Building the week-long outdoor experiment

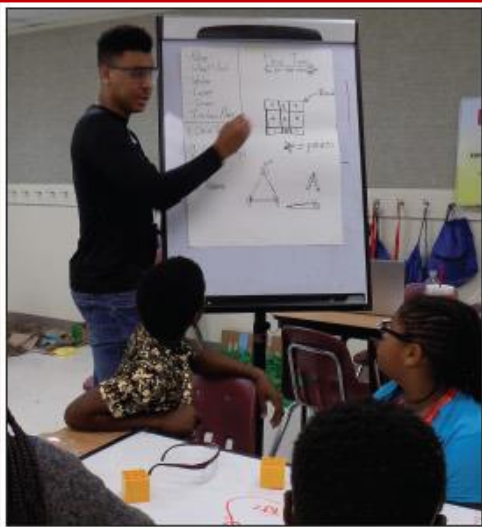
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Guest Speakers



Hazelwood West Robotics Team teaching the summer science students



Meagan Murray, team president of the Hazelwood West Robotics team, helps students understand mechanical engineering



Boeing scientist Christina Willis helps with airplane building



Lesson on fishing with Ranger Bob from Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge



Jeff Capps of TreeHouse Wildlife Center shares some of their rehabilitated animals



Lizz Etzkorn of the Endangered Wolf Center teaches students how to identify wildlife using skulls and pelts

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Taking your teacher home with you

Home Works builds relationships and gets academics out of the classroom

By Francene Bethune
For The St. Louis American

When Karen Kalish learned that students spend only 14 percent of their time in school, she realized a need for a program that made sure they did some of their academic learning at home.

"We need them to engage in their academics at home, because there are so many children in the St. Louis region and across Missouri who have very little reading and talking going on at home," Kalish said. "And when they go to school they are a year or two behind, then it is nearly impossible for them to catch up, which can result in remedial attention, school failure, incarceration and lifetime of hardships."

To address this need, more than a decade ago she founded Home Works, a teacher home visitation program with the purpose to create positive parent-teacher relationships that promote educational practices that will help students' overall wellbeing. The program trains and supports teachers in low-performing schools and then pays them to visit the homes of students who are underperforming in school. It also fosters

a parent-teacher learning team meetings, where the teacher explains to the parents what the student is learning in class. During the meetings, the teacher helps parents set academic goals for students.

Along with home visits and team meetings, families are invited to the school for dinner at the school to promote further engagement between the parents and teachers.

"Our goal was with the dinner was to create an environment outside of parent-teacher conference where the parents and teachers engage and talk comfortably," Kalish said.

The program currently works with students in Saint Louis Public Schools, the Hazelwood School District, and some charter schools like Confluence Academy, though it aims to grow. In the 2017-18 school year, the program conducted 27,000 visits and reached 1,889 students and their families within 27 early childhood centers, elementary, middle, and high schools.

"A positive relationship is key to supporting students on both academic and social-emotional levels, and there is no better way to build a relationship than taking the time to visit a family outside of the course of the normal school day," said Colby Heckendorn, principal of Patrick Henry Downtown Academy, which has incorporated the program for the past four years.

He said the program has benefited the school community in many ways.

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Home Works

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Students in the St. Louis community face many challenges that are hard to deal with, which teachers can see first-hand during home visits.

"This program builds empathy in our team and helps teachers suspend judgment when working with a student who is struggling to be successful," said Heckendorn. "In addition, when we see that a family is in need of a specific resource, our friends at Home Works go out of their way to connect our families with resources that they desperately need."

In 2017 study of over 1000 students funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education, students who were at higher risk (chronically absent or with disciplinary referrals) had better outcomes academically if they participated in Home Works than students who did not participate in the program.

Cassie Boeckman, a teacher at Roosevelt High School, recalled her home visit with a student that resulted in continuous engagement from both parent and student.

"When we had a parent-teacher conference in the fall, I received a drop-in visit from two of the families with whom I had done home visits," said Boeckman. "Out of all my students, those were the only two who came to visit me. They were happy to see a familiar face and check out my classroom."

For more information, visit <https://www.teacherhomevisit.org> or call 314-325-9901.



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