

SIUE STEM Center and community partners boost STEM Education among at-risk youth

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The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach is partnering with the Madison County Housing Authority ([MCHA](#)) and the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation ([MJCHF](#)) to provide after-school programming in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to young girls in Madison and Venice.

The joint effort aims to create and sustain interest in STEM. It will be offered every other week January through May at Meachum Crossing Apartments in Venice and John W. Hamm III Apartments in Madison.

“The program will bring STEM to young girls who are at risk of losing interest in science as they grow older,” said Sharon Locke, director of the [SIUE STEM Center](#). “Our goal is to motivate them to succeed in school, continue to take science and math courses and perhaps pursue STEM careers.”

The STEM Center will provide instruction through its engaging MOSAIC programming series which includes lessons on physics, chemistry, biology, archeology, forensic science and engineering.

“The activities are purposefully designed to be hands-on, with girls collecting data and observations in a way that mirrors how scientists work,” Locke said. “This approach helps children to begin to identify themselves as someone who can do science.”

“Most of the youth that reside in public housing are considered at-risk youth,” said Andy Hightower, executive director of the MCHA. “I’m a firm believer in prevention as opposed to intervention. We know that if a child falls behind academically at a young age, it is much harder to get them back up to par. We’re trying to increase academic scores at a young age.”

“SIUE has a long history of science education, and anytime you can partner with a great institution that has so many resources and noted expertise, then you will certainly move forward in a positive direction,” added Edward Hightower, PhD, executive director of the MJCHF.

“When we looked at one of the areas where there needs to be more programming ideals and collaboration, it was in the area of STEM education,” he continued. “Through this great partnership with the MCHA and the SIUE STEM Center we are reaching our most vulnerable young people, and that is extremely rewarding and gratifying.”

Madison County Housing Authority Mission Statement: To provide safe, quality affordable housing to low income families in Madison County; and to promote personal responsibility and self sufficiency of residents while maintaining the fiscal integrity of the agency.

Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Mission Statement: The MJCH conducts activities that promote mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, and other distinctions; influence positive social change by transforming attitudes and perceptions towards greater acceptance, tolerance, and interaction among these groups; and ultimately remove barriers that hinder individuals and groups from realizing their aspirations and full potential.

SIUE Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach: The STEM Center at SIUE is dedicated to building a community of researchers and educators who together innovate ways to engage students and the public in STEM.