



# **MJCHF, array of others team to present STEM program for local youth**

by Ethan Wibben

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**EDWARDSVILLE - The Madison County Housing Authority (MCHA), the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation (MJCHF), Alton Housing Authority (AHA) and the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for**

**STEM Research, Education and Outreach** have teamed up to present a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program to the local youth.

“The goal is to introduce young (ages 8-12) students, specifically, females to ways in which science, math, and engineering connect to our everyday lives and to topics as food and culture,” said **Sharon Locke**, Associate Professor and Director of the STEM Center at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

The primary focus currently is young girls. The program is offered to 30 middle school girls who meet from 4-5 on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Meachum Crossing Apartments in Venice and John W. Hamm III Apartments in Madison.

“We want the girls to be able to learn science by doing science – collecting data, interpreting the data, and making conclusions based on what they observe,” said Locke. “Science is not a collection of facts in a textbook; it is an observational and experimental process for understanding the world around us.”

When asked why the program is needed Locke answered, “Young children are natural scientists who love exploring their surroundings, but interest in science has declined significantly by the time girls reach middle school. We hope that the girls will get excited about learning, and bring that enthusiasm to their parents, grandparents, friends, and others in the community. Some communities have fewer opportunities to learn about the STEM fields outside of school setting.”

“We want to promote positive attitudes towards STEM. The partnership between the MJCHF and the STEM Center is a chance to explore the best ways to teach about the linkages between Humanities and STEM. As we develop the program, we are also trying to understand which activities work best for generating interest and motivation among the girls,” said Locke.

**Marie Nelson**, Management Coordinator at MCHA, also added that on March 25-27 they would be taking children to the National Civil Rights Museum and the Alex Haley Museum in Memphis. “We want them to learn about the Civil Rights Movement and the impact that it had on providing positive change and greater respect for all man humanities,” said Nelson.

**Colin Wilson**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Stem Center, provides instruction to the students said, “Our STEM activities with humanities applications are based on math and science activities that are exciting and at the same time create on-going interest in fields that will provide long term benefits for the students. Our students are creating positive habits and feelings regarding STEM applications.”

“The MCHA is to be applauded for there efforts in engaging the youth to embrace science and math and at the same time developing a better community for our children,” said **Colin Wilson**.

The program offers activities in biology, physics, engineering, forensic science, marketing, chemistry and management.

Caurie Wilson, 11, said, “I like how we are being helped, supported and encouraged to learn fun activities such as writing, math and science. My favorite activity is when we write poems. The program has taught me to be more respectful and confident.”

Shylise Powell, 9, said, “I like the fun activities that we are doing in this program. They make learning fun.”

Ja’Mia Craig, 10, said, “My favorite part is doing the activities with my friends. My favorite activity was seeing who could build the biggest paper tower because we were losing at first and started with a small tower then worked and ended with a huge tower. I have learned from the program that you can always be yourself.”

There are spots open to join the STEM program and those wanting to join can contact the MCHA or AHA to join.



