

SIUE's Odyssey Science Camp builds kids' love of STEM learning

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EDWARDSVILLE - Interactive learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is happening around every corner at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville during Odyssey Science Camp, being held Monday-Friday, July 16-27 and coordinated by the SIUE STEM Center.

More than 90 youth, ages 7-14, are engaging in hands-on learning activities that stimulate and build interest in STEM.

“Science is about discovery and curiosity,” said Dawn Olive with the SIUE STEM Center. “STEM exploration involves a wide array of topics and activities making for an exciting couple weeks of learning during Odyssey Science Camp. Our campers are constructing robots, learning about crime investigation techniques, constructing bridges, testing concrete, and learning math concepts through puzzles, games and exploration of real-world connections and applications.”

In Vicki Eschman’s explorers classroom, campers entering second and third grade created hovercrafts using CDs and balloons, built straw bridges and constructed clay boats.

“We do very little with paper and pencil during Odyssey Science Camp,” said Eschman. “We focus on hands-on activities that build a love of science and learning. This year, my students are learning a lot about physics and engineering. When we work on projects like our clay boats, the students think of it as playing in water, but they’re actually learning about buoyancy, floatation devices and water density. That’s science. Science is fun!”

“I like the science projects we’re doing,” said 7-year-old Reese Wilson, of Troy. “My brother has been to this camp before, so I’m excited I get to come now, too.”

Eschman’s students also learned about insects, more specifically, honeybees. SIUE Associate Professor of Biological Sciences Jake Williams, PhD, visited their classroom to share his expertise.

“I was glad to share my enthusiasm and love for science and school with these kids,” Williams said. “Everything is so exciting to them at this age. During my visit, the students and I talked about what traits and characters make up an insect and how we can use those traits to categorize them.”

“We looked in more detail at honeybees, as part of my research involves utilizing honeybees to study aging,” he added. “We talked about what makes a hive, what components go into a hive and what bees store in their hive, such as nectar and pollen.”

“I love everything about science camp,” said Williams’ 6-year-old son Ryan. “I like learning new things. I think I want to be a honeybee worker like my dad.”

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville [Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach](#) comprises an independent group of researchers and educators, innovating ways to engage students and the public in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Within the SIUE Graduate School, the Center brings together research faculty, graduate students and practitioners to conduct education research. The Center

contributes educational expertise to SIUE undergraduate classes and provides professional development for K-12 teachers. The Center boasts a significant library of equipment and resources, which are available for loan at no cost to campus and regional instructors. For more information, visit <https://www.siue.edu/stem/about.shtml> or contact STEM Center Director Sharon Locke at (618) 650-3065 or stemcenter@siue.edu.