

Tri-County Teachers Participate in Space Foundation Sessions

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More than 80 teachers from Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's Counties participated in the Space

Tim Van Milligan, left, an engineer and chief visionary officer with Apogee Components, assists Benjamin Stoddert Middle School science teacher Jennifer L. Davis, center, and Westlake High School science teacher Charles "C.J." Newcomb, right, in constructing apogee rockets during the Space Discovery Institute's "Rocketry and the Biology of Living in Space: Living Aboard the International Space Station," session held at Maurice J. McDonough High School. Charles County Public Schools has a partnership with the Colorado Springs based Space Foundation to help promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs in the school system.

Discovery Institute offered July 21 through August 1 as part of Charles County Public Schools' partnership with the Space Foundation.

The four, week-long sessions, held at Maurice J. McDonough High School, offered teachers opportunities to learn about rocketry and the biology of living in space aboard the international space station, astronomy principles for the classroom, the history and geology of Earth, and the effects of long term space travel.

The 18 participants in the "Rocketry and the Biology of Living in Space: Living Aboard the International Space Station," learned to design, launch and build classroom rockets to incorporate in to lesson plans for students. The rockets ranged from beginner levels of use, such as paper straw rockets, to more advanced rockets, such as the Goddard rocket, composed of foam and rubber bands.

J.P. Ryon Elementary School science teacher Kimberly Stillwell attended the rocketry session and said she learned a lot to take back to her students.

"This is the first time I have taken one of these courses. I learned a lot of hands-on activities that I can bring back the J.P. Ryon community. We are learning to instill these ideas and encourage our students to become more interested in engineering. It is amazing what we are learning," she said.

Michael Forrest, a science teacher at Matthew Henson Middle School, taught physics for more than 15 years and will begin teaching sixth-grade earth science this school year. He said the rocketry course is a "refresher" course for him and he plans to take back much of what he has learned into the classroom.

"We are working with water rockets, Goddard rockets, 2-liter bottle rockets. The partnership we have is great because of how willing the Space Foundation is to send you classroom materials," Forrest added.

The astronomy session, "Astronomy Principles for the Classroom: kinesthetic astronomy," provided the participants with lessons on moving astronomy, such as orbital movements and similarities between Earth and Mars, and focused on the constellations and the structure of the solar system.

Participants also took a field trip to Goddard Space Flight Center to experience the day-to-day operations and to understand the role the center plays in space exploration, and a field trip to the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center to observe the stars and constellation in the night sky with advanced telescopes.

Second-year McDonough High School teacher Charles Centivany, who teaches ninth-grade Earth science, said he has developed at least four to five lesson plans from his participation in the astronomy system session to incorporate into his classroom this fall.

"I have a

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