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Celebrating scientific students

BY LAURYN LONGACRE
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MILTON — The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) on Wednesday celebrated six students who spent their school year developing action plans for STEM-focused programming.

The CSIU Chief Science Officer Cabinet (CSO) held its end-of-the-year celebration at the CSIU headquarters, with a focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Designed for students in grades six through 12, the CSO program harbors creative thinking and leadership skills for students “who are passionate about being the student voice for STEM advocacy,” said CSIU Instructional Technology and STEM Specialist Tanya Dynda.

“So many times we talk about STEM and it’s an adult conversation, and yet the voice of the students isn’t heard,” Dynda said. “So, this program becomes that opportunity for students.”

The program opened at



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From left, Terri Campbell and Milton Area High School senior Savannah Nixon participate in a coding activity during the Chief Science Officers end-of-year celebration, held Wednesday by CSIU.

the start of the school year with a two-day Leadership Training Institute (LTI). During this time, students participated in STEM-related activities.

After the LTI, the students started crafting their own action plans, with a goal to complete them by the end of

the school year.

“Most of (the action plans) were about doing what are called STEMonstrations to the younger students,” Dyn-da said.

A STEMonstratation, she said, offers an opportunity for the CSOs to be leaders as they model STEM activities for elementary school children.

“One school did (their action plan) based on career awareness. So they took their local CTE programs and they designed a STEM activity around that specific CTE program that the students had a choice to go to two of the eight stations,” Dyn-da said, describing the Milton Area High School student’s trip to Baugher Elementary School on Feb. 15.

Throughout the year, the CSOs attended two cabinet meetings, where they discussed the progress of their action plans and sought advice or support from Dyn-

da.

Milton Area High School’s CSO representative was senior Savannah Nixon, advised by Natalie Myers-Easton.

Nixon’s action plan was titled “Math in Unusual Places” and was hosted at the CSIU. The activity had young students in their school’s gifted program use objects other than a ruler to measure tables and chairs.

“They measured it with sticky notes, pencils and paper clips. We basically made up this whole theatric scenario where I played a queen and the students were my royal carpenters,” Nixon explained.

Myers-Easton said the kids loved the activity.

“I feel like it’s really good for future generations to know about (STEM) because it’s about to be like the forefront of future careers,” Nixon said. “It’s all about hands-on learning and getting that kind of hands-on experience

for a whole plethora of future careers.”

Line Mountain CSO representatives were sixth-grade students Raelyn Graff and Olivia Kelley, advised by Kam Traugh. Graff and Kelley said they began their CSO journey without knowing much about the program.

“We did STEMonstrations three times. We showed them to our elementary school, it was K through fourth grade. And then in May, we’re doing a dinosaur STEM camp for second through fourth graders, to show them about dinosaurs,” Graff said.

The activities will take place in the school’s gymnasium, where the girls will demonstrate how big the dinosaurs were, by using pieces of paper.

Pennsylvania Dinosaurs and The Children’s Museum will also attend the student-run activity day, offering extra activities related to dinosaurs and sunlight.

“So far, we learned how to be stronger leaders and we learned how to expand STEM in our school and how to work well as a group,” Kelley said.

Traugh noted that the program’s experience allowed the students to explore different career paths as they grew older.

St. Joseph School CSO representatives were sixth-grade students Oliver Reidinger, Alejandro Buga-rini and Gabriel Corrales, advised by Kurt Eck.

According to Corrales, the students designed experiments with hot cocoa and marshmallows as well as a Cubetto.

A Cubetto is a STEM toy robot made to teach children coding in a fun manner.

“There is like a little control board, and when you put tiles in it, it orients the movement,” Corrales said. “Green tile goes forward, red tile takes it right, yellow to the left, blue repeats all actions.

It’s been a lot of fun.”

However, Corrales said, as a CSO, he didn’t just educate; he also learned.

“I think it helped me become more of a leader, have more confidence in myself, and it’s just a great way to teach the little kids about STEM,” Corrales said. “I feel like STEM is in everything, and also technology.”

During the end-of-year celebration, the CSO representatives participated in activities involving solving a puzzle and racing a Sphero BOLT, a rolling robot they code.

At the end of the celebration, two awards were given out. Winner of the individual Outstanding CSO award was Corrales. Winners of the Outstanding CSO team award were Graff, Kelley and their team member Blake Rothermel.

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