

Toy Adaptation Day held by CSIU

BY MATT JONES
THE WEEKENDER

MILTON — Toys are designed to be fun, but they're not always necessarily designed to be accessible. The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) is seeking to rectify that by adapting toys to make them fun for a broad range of students.

"Today is our first-ever Toy Adaptation Day, so it's all about accessibility. We have high school students here from two local high schools that are taking regular toys, taking them apart, and rewiring them so they work with a larger on-off switch for students with disabilities," said CSIU Assistant Technology Consultant Kaitlyn Hock.

After hearing about a similar program from the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit, Hock was inspired to adapt and implement her own version at CSIU.

"I took it and kind of ran with it and created our own version of it," said Hock.

On Friday morning, students from Millville High School and Columbia-Montour Area Vocational Technical School gathered in a kind of makeshift assembly line to deconstruct store-bought toys and rewire them with larger on-off buttons.

"We had a file on the 3D printer and we printed out all three parts of the button. Then we have to put a switch in there and get the wires ready to be able to solder the wires on to the switch to put a spring in," said Millville Area School District Engineering CTE teacher Jestine Myers, who brought five students from her program to help complete the work.

At various stations around the room, students worked on altering different types of toys. For many, they relied on the skills they had learned in the classroom to inform their hands-on approach to toy adaptation.

"We're in the mechatronics shop class, so this is what we do in shop," said Columbia-Montour Area Vocational Technical

School student Jathan Martinez, who worked diligently to create a new switch for the rewired toys.

Once the larger buttons were successfully added to each toy, they were then sent to a table to be stitched up.

"What I'm doing is, after it's been adapted, I'm sewing it back up so it looks brand new," said Avery Lanzi, a Columbia-Montour AVTS senior. "It's a cool experience and it's doing something for the community."

Student testers from the W.W. Evans Elementary School, Bloomsburg, Autistic Support Program had the first crack at each newly adapted toy. Judging by the elation on their faces as their hands pressed the large buttons, the toys were even more fun than before.

"The plan with this is we are giving toys out to classrooms around the 17 school districts," said Hock. "We're doing about 50 toys for free, just to give to the classrooms to use."

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Kayla Snyder and Kyle Veen, a W.W. Evans Elementary School student, test out one of the adaptive toys being made at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit's Toy Adaptation Day.

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