

Pathfinders Program at Midd-West

By Kay Poeth



Jacob Wright from the West Snyder Pathfinders program explodes the volcano he made using a combination of baking soda and vinegar.



Paige Hansel from West Snyder and Kinsey Moyer from Middleburg Elementary were excited to see their volcano erupt during the summertime Pathfinders program that focused on STEAM activities.

West Snyder Elementary School and Middleburg Elementary were bursting with excitement and learning as the summer Pathfinders program got underway. The program focusing on STEAM activities: science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math was held for a 2-week session in June and again in July. The goal of the Pathfinders program is to spark and sustain interest, engagement, and achieving in STEAM content using evidence-based programs and activities.

Pathfinders is a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program, a federal USDE grant, provided

by the PA Department of Education and administered by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit with the host district.

According to Brianna Kunkel of CSIU#16, "The mission of Pathfinders after school and summer program is to utilize a community effort to assist students and their families in improving their self-esteem, improving academics and developing good character."

Homework help is mandatory for all students enrolled in the program. The students may work independently on their assignments or receive help from district certified teachers, para-educators or program mentors.

This summer, student activities included constructing paper maché volcanoes and exploding them with a mixture of baking soda and vinegar. The young learners also engaged in an array of Lego challenges and created a bee habitat using soup cans. Another fun activity involved painting rocks and writing inspiration messages on them. Then the painted rocks were placed around the playground for all to enjoy. At another station the students made picture frames using paper and Popsicle sticks. They painted them and decorated the frames with stickers. Other activities included creating clay models and box cars. During the camping session, the students made solar oven smores using tin foil and the sun to melt the marshmallows. Minute to Win It games were also a hit with the students.

"I really like building with clay," said Samuel Wright while his twin brother, Jacob, was fascinated with "making volcanoes and watching them explode." Both boys agreed that the program was really fun and they are sad that this is their last year to attend.

In addition to these interesting and educational hands-on activities, the students participated in both organized physical fitness activities that included basketball, kickball, capture the flag, ring toss, castle ball, scooters, and obstacle courses as well as free play time. A cold pack lunch was provided by the Central PA Food Bank.

Transportation was provided to and from the summer program. The summer program is held for two weeks in June and two weeks in July. Families are invited to visit the program and are encouraged to attend quarterly gatherings. The same program was held at West Snyder Elementary and Middleburg Elementary.

"I am very pleased to have the Pathfinders program here at West Snyder Elementary. We have one of the highest participation rates within the Intermediate Unit," noted West Snyder Elementary Principal Corey Aucker. "Our students benefit greatly from this program by receiving tutoring in reading and math. They also enjoy other services such as physical fitness, technology education, and character building."



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