

## COMMUNITY NEWS

### Has Geek Become Chic?

STEM makes science interesting for Middle School Students

By Seth Dorrell

Science has long been touted as being nerdy and boring, but in the last several decades it has become the leader in almost every successful industry, from pharmaceutical to technologically advanced companies.

In light of this, Shaw Middle School hosted its NASA STEM Night last Thursday, and not one person attending could call it boring. This event celebrated the beginning of the second year as a dynamic school, and community partnership with NASA as an official "NASA Explorer's School."



Walking into the school, science projects and tables cluttered with robots lined down the hallway. Children crowded around a robot de-

signed to follow human voice, while another robot traveled around a large box, turning corners without leaving the walls' edge. Space age-like domes made of paper and tape housed at least three children each in front of the auditorium doors.

Inside the auditorium, standing next to a space suit, a representative from NASA discussed the future of science and technology and explained ways that students could get involved. The screen behind him stated candidly: "We do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future."



After he finished speaking, the excited crowd of students, parents, and guests were led to participate in several breakout sessions dedi-

cated to all sorts of scientific discovery.

One classroom hosted engineering activities, focusing on city planning; while another had participants demonstrating aerodynamics with ping pong balls and blow-dryers. Guests traveled up and down the school hallways, entering open classrooms to learn about new scientific methods of learning.

Maybe the most popular topic was "sustainable food production", where students served nutritious food produced in efficient ways. People swarmed the room to get a taste of the students' presentation. Class projects were also displayed,

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featuring students' work in various scientific explorations. One science class displayed ways they created cell structures and the different contents of molecules.

The night closed with one last science entertainment show. Grand Hank, from Grand Hank Productions, Inc. pumped up the crowd using his unique style of integrating Hip Hop music to teach science. Mr. Hank has been involved in teaching science for some time now and is widely known for his work with the School District of Philadelphia and their television network, as well as his work with radio station Power 99.

Student volunteers were brought on stage to participate in various science experiments, covering everything from fire safety to chemical compounds. This

science lesson turned dance party when hip hop beats thumped between the auditorium walls. Students could barely contain themselves with the loud music, and dancing became part of the show by involving students as well as teachers and parents. The entire audience yelled to the DJ, "Marty Geez, We need that beat!" and Shaw Middle School students broke out in choreographed dances to the music as the audience cheered.

Sierra Harris, a Shaw student, joked "My favorite topic covered tonight was the food! Just playing, I really liked the robotics and experiments with gravity." Sixth grader Stephon Gonzales agreed: "Robotics was really awesome because of all the different things they can do."

Their main goal to interest kids in science, The Science, Technology, Engineering and

Mathematics (STEM) Program always has many projects occurring throughout the city. With the hard work and dedication of

staff and students, this last August a select group of students from Shaw's "Robotics Team" had the opportunity to participate in the "First Japan Tournament" in Japan. All the students received a medal in the tournament!

This three year partnership is dedicated to expose students to innovative and creative ways to learn through science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. A substantial grant has also allowed the school to purchase computer hardware and software to support these programs. The main overall focus of the program will be in the fields of biotechnology, aeronautics, robotics, and nanotechnology.

"We believe that this partnership will bring great opportunities for our students and our community, as it will inevitably change the culture of the environment they live in," Principal Sharif El-Mekki stated in an invitation letter. "This partnership will sustain Shaw's vision of generating excitement through endless academic opportunities, and also establish the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields as attainable career options."

#### GIFT AND TOY DRIVE!

Concerned Parents Inc. is holding a toy/gift drive for needy children and their families. They are especially looking for clothing for teenagers as they are frequently a population that gets overlooked. Please contact Concerned Parents Inc at 215-727-1854 or go to their office at 54th and Woodland for information about how you can help.