

Space and Rocketry camp makes science fun for local kids

By Joel Fortner
AEDC Public Affairs

Fifteen solid-fueled rockets were recently seen being launched from Arnold Air Force Base, followed by tiny, green aliens parachuting to the earth's surface.

Last week, 15 children from local communities participated in a weeklong Space and Rocketry science camp at the Arnold Community Center. Science Adventures, a company headquartered out of Huntington Beach, Calif., put on the camp, which was lead by "mad scientist" Brian Kinghorn, 26.

Science Adventures is a company that designs, teaches and administers science education programs for children countrywide.

"The significance of this is that AEDC, because of our contractor-based work force, is very dependent upon the local community to provide our

technical work force," said Lance Baxter, who served as the "resident space guy" at the camp. "By motivating the young people in this area towards science and mathematics, we are laying the foundation for tomorrow's world-leading technical expertise here at AEDC."

The kids spent the week learning about laws of science, such as Newton's 3rd Law, and applied them to projects, such as a rocket launch. For those who do not remember this law from school, it is simply, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Kinghorn teaches these scientific lessons through simple concepts like pushing a skateboard.

"If you want to push your skateboard forward, you push your foot backward," he explained. "So if they can see that, if they can do something that experiments with it like a force – a push or a pull; if we can get them involved in seeing, hearing, doing and actually building something – we try to

incorporate all the learning styles into the one lesson.

"Sometimes during the week, I'll actually make a mistake, and the kids will correct me, saying 'no, that's not how that principle goes.' It's pretty exciting to see when that happens, that they're not just having fun, they're not just building something cool, but they're actually getting the science concepts down."

Also during the week, the kids constructed a model of the planet Saturn and its largest moon, Titan. They also built a model of the sun and "moon hats," which were used to demonstrate the monthly phases of the moon.

"It's all tied into the same theme, and it all gets put together," Kinghorn said. "So we're talking about space and rocketry, and it's all about how the rockets that we're building carry over into the things we'd find in space and how we study astronomy."

According to Kinghorn, Science Adventures has signed

with Air Force bases across the country to host on-site science camps during the summer months. Kinghorn said the Space and Rocketry camp is the most popular with the children, primarily because they get to launch rockets at the end of the week.

Even parents and community center employees got in on the action.

"We've learned a lot of stuff," said Deborah Trice, who is the youth programmer/recreational aid at the community center. "I sat down for four hours of training with Mr. Brian, and we went over a fantastic flight training where I built a glider for the first time. And, I took it out to the ball field and flew it. So this has been exciting for me, too."

The overall excitement peaked on the final morning of the camp. After a launch-threatening rain shower passed through, only dampening the ground, Kinghorn lead the kids onto the ball field. After safety guidelines were explained, each

student set up their rocket with the help of their bearded "mad scientist."

After the traditional three-two-one countdown, three silver and red rockets at a time blasted off into the overcast sky, marked by white plumes of smoke. At the pinnacle of each launch, plastic alien's safely ejected from the rockets and parachuted, sometimes not so gently, back to the safety of the earth.

According to Trice, the camp was a huge success, not only because of the positive reactions and involvement, but it brought in children from local communities who had never visited the center before.

"With this science camp, we had children who normally did not participate in our regular program everyday," she said, "but we pulled a lot of children who maybe were in the Manchester and Tullahoma areas who don't live out here who came into the program.

"As long as I can continue to pull new children in, that's what it's all about."

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At left, Tori Marble, front, and fellow science campers put the final touches on a model of Saturn and its largest moon, Titan. The building of the model was one of several science projects during the weeklong science camp. At right, Deborah Trice and Lance Baxter launch rockets with Erika Carpenter at the Arnold Community Center ball field as Chance Baxter, Tori Marble, Noemi Leon, Maria Matty, Rachael Stewart and Scott Cossentine count down to launch. (Photos by Joel Fortner)



Brian Kinghorn, right, helps Chance Baxter prepare his solid-fueled rocket for a morning launch. Chance was one of 15 local children who attended a weeklong Space and Rocketry camp.

