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STEM

Southeastern Massachusetts Network

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500 SE MA Students Inspired By Science

Emmalisa wants to be a biologist. Anna plans to study astrophysics. Nicholas plans to become an electrical engineer. David hopes to study video game design.

These are exactly the outcomes hoped for by the organizers of the SE MA STEM Expo. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. States Katherine Honey, SE MA STEM Coordinator, "We wanted students to learn about all the great opportunities available in science and technology, and get them excited about pursuing further education in math and science-related fields."

500 students grades 5-8, over 100 STEM professionals, and approximately 200 teachers and school district representatives converged on Bridgewater State University to attend the May 24 Expo. Twenty-seven school districts from Canton to the Cape were represented.

Opening the day for the students were Daniel Pratt, Supervisor of the Massachusetts State Police Crime Scene Response Unit, and Bridgewater State University president Dana Mohler-Faria. Mr. Pratt is one of 15 individuals profiled in the WOW video, created by the Governor's STEM Council and viewable on the Department of Higher Education STEM Pipeline Fund website, to give a face to the exciting careers that await those who graduate with strong STEM skills. Pres. Mohler-Faria encouraged the youngsters to consider STEM majors and careers: "Massachusetts doesn't have the natural resources of other states. What we have is brain power. What we have is you, our young people."

Education Secretary Paul Reville welcomed the adults in attendance by emphasizing the importance of a skilled STEM workforce to Massachusetts' economy. "STEM is where our state

needs to go,” said Sec. Reville. “We need a workforce that can fill the high-skill, high-knowledge jobs of our innovation economy.”

Among the activities that the young attendees could participate in were cleaning up a mock oil spill, building a structure out of spaghetti and marshmallows, conducting a mock well-baby checkup, and creating a computer game.

Sophie, of Brockton, commented on her favorite display. “Definitely the robot cars,” she said. “It’s great to see how all that technology combines to create an instrument you can use.” Sophie plans to become a biomedical engineer.

Lockheed Martin Sippican provided a display showcasing its Engineers in the Classroom program. Tracy McNeil, representing Communications and Public Affairs from the Marion, MA office, explained why the company considers it important to participate in events like the Expo and inspire STEM enthusiasm from an early age. “Today’s students have the potential to be tomorrow’s engineers. Our engineers do really cool work, and we want to share that enthusiasm with students.” Lockheed Martin Sippican also sponsored lunch refreshments for adult attendees.

The SE MA STEM Network plans to continue working with school districts who attended the Expo throughout the 2012-13 year. The Network will help educators share models, connect to resources, and acquire professional development to build their local STEM plans and projects. Kathleen Kirby, the administrator of the SE MA STEM Network, explains, “Next year, we hope to have events similar to the Expo happening throughout the region. Rather than 500 kids attending, we’d like to have 5,000 participating in exciting STEM activities, in communities throughout southeastern Massachusetts.”

The SE MA STEM Network is one of seven regional networks funded by the MA Department of Higher Education STEM Pipeline Fund. The SE MA Network is administered by CONNECT, a partnership of the six public institutions of higher education in Southeastern Massachusetts.

For more information, visit the STEM EXPO WEBSITE at <http://www.connectsemass.org/stem/stemexpo.html>.