

News Release

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IU Kokomo inspires future scientists with summer camp

KOKOMO, Ind. — Leda Casey gained inspiration to become a geologist from an eighth-grade field trip to the Indianapolis Water Company.

She’s now giving that same nudge to area middle school students, as an instructor at Indiana University Kokomo’s Science Rocks! Summer camp.

“I hope they get an understanding what geologists and other scientists do, and what careers are available to them in these fields,” Casey said. “We need to develop these young people to be our region’s future geologists, engineers, doctors, and scientists.”

This is the fourth summer for the free camps, taught by IU Kokomo faculty and using the world-class science labs and equipment available in the campus’ Hunt Hall. Approximately 20 middle school students from populations underrepresented in science and math fields attended the camp during the past two weeks.

This year’s program started with a field trip to the Kokomo Wastewater Treatment Plant, followed by fieldwork on campus, pumping water from campus monitoring wells.

Casey, a lecturer in geology, helped the students measure the well’s depth and water content, then demonstrated how to draw water up a plastic tube into a sample bottle.

Noah Gallaher, a seventh-grader at Kokomo’s Maple Crest Middle School, was surprised by the amount of work it took to get a small sample.

“When we talk about doing fieldwork at school, it sounds a lot easier,” he said.

Casey said people picture geologists climbing rocks to gather samples, but “this is more urban geology. This is what most Indiana geologists do.”

Rajiyah Townsend, a Western Middle School eighth-grader, said she liked the hands-on learning activities.

“I love how I am getting an in-depth experience. It makes it easier to learn when I am actually doing something, rather than reading about it in a book or hearing a teacher talk about it.”

This is her second year to attend the camp, and she recommends it to other students.

“It’s fun to be here, and the campus is really cool. I like experiencing what it is like to be an IU Kokomo student.”

Her cousin Beza Townsend, an eighth-grader from Sts. Joan of Arc and Patrick School, said she liked the computer-programming lesson, where they activated smart phone apps.

“I like learning something from doing it, not just listening to someone talking about it,” she said. “It makes science fun.”

Christian Chauret, chairman of the science, mathematics and informatics department, said the camp is part of an effort to attract more students to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

“We give them a chance to explore a wide variety of scientific fields, including in the health sciences,” he said. “We want them to experience what an IU Kokomo student experiences in the lab. The students have been very excited to try new things and to have success in their experiments.”

With this being the fourth year for the program, Chauret hopes he will soon see former participants come back to campus as students, especially in the sciences.

“That would be a great success for our program, if we inspired these students to return to us after they graduate from high school,” he said. “We hope we are showing them the great opportunity to earn a high-quality degree on our campus.”

The camp was funded with grants from the IU Women’s Philanthropy Council and the North Central Indiana Areas Health Education Center.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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