

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Middle schoolers engage in hands-on science at IU Kokomo camp

KOKOMO, Ind.— Physical exercise is a traditional part of the summer camp experience.

Hooking the camper up for an electrocardiogram test immediately afterwards is a bit more unusual. But at Indiana University Kokomo’s Science Rocks! summer camp, it’s all part of the learning experience.

The camp, which includes 15 Kokomo-area middle school students, offers seven days of hands-on learning experiences, in geology, chemistry, microbiology, physiology, and health sciences.

During the physiology session, the students wrote down their heart rates in their lab manuals, then did more than a dozen jumping jacks, and measured their heart rates again.

Michael Finkler, associate professor of physiology, then talked about the human circulatory system, and what happens during exercise that makes the heart rate increase.

“I like working with this age group, and explaining the ‘whys’ behind what they see,” he said. “We go beyond the simple answer of ‘my heart rate increased because I exercised,’ and explain in more detail why that happens.”

Finkler said these students are just the right age to teach that science is fun, “so we can spark the interest now, and sow the seeds for careers in sciences.”

Lucy Baker, a sixth-grader from Sts. Joan of Arc and Patrick School, already has the interest in science, and plans to be an engineer.

She enjoyed taking water samples during the geology and chemistry session, and testing the water quality.

“I was surprised at how many different chemicals were in the water,” she said. “I like that this is hands-on. I don’t have someone telling me how something works, I’m trying it myself.”

Her classmate Renee Creppy liked looking at bacteria under the microscopes, and was amazed to learn how much bacteria is in the human body.

“This is a really fun way to learn about science,” she said.

Cooper Reed, a sixth-grader from Central Middle School, hopes to learn more so he can use his science kits.

“I have tons of science kits, and I don’t know how to use them,” he said. “I want to learn more about science.”

He liked testing water quality, and learning about pollution, and he’s excited about the health sciences sessions later in the camp.

“I may be interested in working in health sciences, so I want to learn more,” he said.

Ian Retz, also a Central Middle School sixth-grader, was interested in learning how the parts of a heart function.

Christian Chauret, Dean of the School of Sciences, said the camp’s goal is to pique the interest of young people, especially women and minorities, in science-related fields.

“We have to nurture that interest when they are young, so they can take the appropriate classes in high school, and then hopefully return to us as students,” he said.

This is the fifth year IU Kokomo has hosted the Science Rocks! summer camp. It is funded with grants from North Central Indiana Areas Health Education Center and Community Howard Regional Health.

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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