

CANYON COURIER

Science night at WJMS provides interactive fun for students, parents

By Deb Hurley Brobst

September 12, 2018

Science is alive and well at West Jefferson Middle School.

At the fourth annual science night on September 5, students moved from station to station to get hands-on experience with moving robots, dissecting cow eyes, making hats of a brain, looking at brine shrimp through microscopes and more.

“(West Jeff Middle) is a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) school, so we wanted to do something for the community to come and enjoy a family science night,” said eighth-grade science teacher Kathy Fuchigami. “It’s a chance for parents to turn their kids loose, and then they have an opportunity to interact with each other.”

Members of the school’s Technology Student Association set up an obstacle course, and participants used e-tablets to send robots through. Sixth-graders Skyler Battersby and Benson White enjoyed making the robots move, not really caring about the cones and ramps set up for the robots.

Skyler’s dad, Simon Battersby, said they came to the science night simply because Skyler asked to go, and Skyler was enjoying many of the 16 stations.

Principal David Schoenhals, who is new to the school this year, was impressed with the entire evening and the participation, noting it was a great way to get the school year started and thanking the science teachers for their hard work.

The cow eyeball dissection table was a hit with young and old students alike, and retired West Jeff Middle School science teacher Margo Lopenske and Maureen Gallagher with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explained the parts of the eyeball and showed students how to gently dissect them.

Sixth-grader Nadia Williard, after dissecting an eye, commented that she liked how interactive science night was.

“It has lots of hands-on things, nothing behind glass doors,” she said. “You can actually do things. It’s more fun this way.”



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Corbin Barker, 7, shows off the brain hat he made with his mom, Allison Barker, at West Jeff Middle School’s science night.

Seven-year-old Corbin Barker made a hat with his mom Allison Barker, who teaches at West Jeff Middle. Corbin was concerned that his hat, which showed all the parts of a brain, was a bit too big, but his mom said his brain could never be too large.

“This is a perfect event for a rainy night,” she said.

David Williams, the schools engineering and robotics teacher, wearing a T-shirt that said, “Stand Back. I’m going to try science,” explained the importance of science night.

“We are a science-based school,” he said. “We are teaching kids 21st century skills. ... This is just one cog in what we do here.” Did you know that putting glow sticks in hot water will make them shine brighter, while putting them in colder water will help them last longer?



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Retired West Jeff Middle School science teacher Margo Lopenske enjoys explaining how to dissect cow eyes at science night.



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Maureen Gallagher with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helps sixth-grader Nadia Williard with her dissection.