

Mini STEM-tastic “Choose Your Challenge” Night draws large crowd of STEM enthusiasts seeking hands-on fun & learning



March 29, 2017
For Immediate Release
Contact: Jill Bock
Phone: (917) 941-0816
jbuck@lmstemalliance.org

LARCHMONT, NY - Mini STEM-tastic “Choose Your Challenge Night,” held at Hommocks Middle School, drew a capacity crowd of almost 1,000 on Friday night with tickets selling out days before the event. The festival, a hands-on celebration of science, technology, engineering and math, is an annual cornerstone event organized and led by the STEM Alliance of Larchmont-Mamaroneck.

Kids of all ages joined in Rubik’s Cube challenges, Lego mystery builds, Oobleck mixing and dozens of other STEM-oriented activities. A highlight was the “Chain Reaction Challenge,” in which teams bring together separate segments of a giant Rube Goldberg machine.

“What can be greater than partnering with a local nonprofit to host experiences that make learning fun. We have 1,000 people coming out on a Friday night to do chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy and math! We’re thrilled to see a hundred volunteers and community members make STEM learning come alive in our building,” said Rob Andrews, Asst. Principal of Hommocks Middle School.

Margaret Käufer, President of the STEM Alliance of Larchmont-Mamaroneck said: “This hands-on family activity night makes learning fun and brings STEM skills to life. “This may be a ‘mini’ event, but it is mega STEM-tastic.”

Mamaroneck Union Free School District teachers Jeremy Franze and Henry Smith helped attendees experiment with physical computing and coding robots.

Mathnasium, devoted to making math fun, turned the bottle flipping craze into a probability challenge, enticing dozens of kids to flip bottles, calculate how they landed, then figure out the probability in fraction and percentage form - all while having a blast.

Julia Steinmetz and her son Jasper hosted a timed Rubik’s Cube challenge station. And at the Air Hoop Challenge, repeat exhibitor and Hommocks 7th grader Jerry Orans and his family used their tinkering creativity to create a game that let attendees navigate a beach ball through hula hoops using a converted leaf blower.

What’s the point? Whether for fun or for finding solutions to real world problems, combining creativity with STEM skills leads to innovation. In Jerry’s case, he wed structural engineering and physics while persevering to turn the idea into a finished, fun project.

Over two dozen volunteer challenge leaders created experiences that had kids and adults, with neurons firing, roll up their sleeves to solve problems. Challenges were funny, messy, and even sophisticated.

The festival, now in it’s fourth year, has previously been held on a Saturday in spring and welcomed over 2,000 participants of all ages. This year, it was organized on a smaller scale. And unlike previous events, which had nominal ticket costs, this one was free. The enthusiasm of both visitors and the many community members sharing their STEM passions was palpable.

“We are thrilled that we were able to offer this year’s STEM-tastic event as a FREE public event, thanks to increased funding from individuals in the community,” said Chris Templeman, VP of Resource Development for the STEM Alliance. “Next up for us, we are offering three 10-hour robotics workshops for middle school girls to support the growth of women pursuing STEM careers.” Contact info@lmstemalliance.org for registration details.



CAPTION: The Air Hoop Challenge turned leaf blowers into instruments of physics & fun at Mini STEM-tastic
Photo Credit: Ari Jacobson, 2017

About STEM Alliance of Larchmont-Mamaroneck: The STEM Alliance is a grass roots, non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing K-12 STEM education and enrichment initiatives to benefit students, parents and educators in our schools and community. The STEM Alliance's vision is to serve as a network that connects communities to STEM skills as a means of solving problems and fostering innovation.

High resolution images are available upon request.

For more info: www.lmstemalliance.org

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CAPTION: NY State Senator George Latimer looks on as young participants build sophisticated structures with Keva Planks at Mini STEM-tastic
Photo Credit: Ben Robbins, 2017



CAPTION: A virtual reality headset is employed to control a robotic space rover at Jupiter Joe's Sidewalk Astronomy challenge at Mini STEM-tastic.
Photo Credit: Cice Käufer, 2017