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Coding 4 Kids Camp Can be “Cool” During a Hot Summer

AIKEN, S.C., July 13, 2021 – Some robots performed as programmed, while some went astray, during the Coding 4 Kids summer camp, recently held at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC). Just the same, all the participants gained valuable experience during the week-long event sponsored by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS).

The camp’s innovative, hands-on projects and challenging activities taught students how to handle a world where computer chips are found in numerous consumer products and industrial equipment. The campers learned basic coding skills and applied those skills in various ways, including programming robotic objects.

“This year two of our camps focused on cyber and coding with the help of SRNS,” said John Hutchens, Director of Special Programs, RPSEC, University of South Carolina Aiken. “The overarching goal was to inform kids about cyber and coding in a fun and interesting way. They’re all from local schools, third through fifth grade.”

Hutchens explained that a wide array of occupations require some coding knowledge, even indirectly. And, the need for experience with coding will only increase, due to the growing number of Aiken, South Carolina and Augusta, Georgia area organizations and universities moving into the field of cybersecurity and technology.

“They’re going to need a huge cyber workforce soon,” said Hutchens. “And it’s not going to end anytime soon.”



Savannah River Nuclear Solutions sponsored this year’s Coding 4 Kids summer camp at the University of South Carolina Aiken’s Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. Each four-person team worked together to program a robot and monitor its performance, making adjustments as necessary.

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According to a 2019 article in the New York Times, there will be an estimated 3.5 million unfilled cybersecurity jobs worldwide this year, an increase of 350% from 2014.

The camp provided a variety of games and activities to pique the interest of each student and, hopefully, inspire them to pursue future academic and occupational opportunities related to cyber technology, cybersecurity and coding.

“I think this camp has been cool because we got to program robots to move stuff. Not many people get to do that,” said Gunoor Sarmaha, a fourth-grade student at Stevens Creek Elementary in Augusta. “Maybe I can create a robot that will take trash that is polluting everything and turn it into fuel that won’t create all that smoke and stuff. For now, I want to become a programming astronomer that can program a space car that will take people to Mars and back and make millions of billions of dollars.”

Ariana Lopez, a Chukker Creek Elementary fifth grader from Aiken, was impressed with the high degree of interaction within the Coding 4 Kids Camp.

“I’ve been to other coding camps, and this is the most hands-on one that I’ve ever attended,” said Lopez. “It’s really neat. This is definitely my favorite coding camp.”

Lopez stated her dream job was to use concept art to design characters used in video games, which heavily involves programming. “This camp is helping me to understand what I need to learn,” she said.

The Ruth Patrick Science Center offers several summer camps each year, each emphasizing a different skillset or area of knowledge.

“Our mission is to infuse the love of science, technology, engineering and math within the hearts and minds of each participant,” said Hutchens. “And these camps are one of the best ways to do so at an early age. We’re trying to make a difference in their lives.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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