

Learning Initiative, 'Science on Wheels' programs take local students along for the 'ride'

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Thirty-two students from the Scio Central School District and Immaculate Conception School, Wellsville, were recently treated to a presentation on science and engineering courtesy of Alfred University's Children and Youth Learning Initiative (CYLI) and Science on Wheels, a student driven organization that provides demonstrations for local school districts. The visiting students experimented with slime, wall-walkers and optics, participated in a demonstration of "beetle bot" fighting robots and, the crowd favorite, experimented with a Van der Graff generator. "The kids seem to really enjoy learning in this sort of hands-on environment," said CYLI Director Christopher Romanchock. "We bring kids on campus for a wide variety of programming, but slime? Electricity? Killer robots? This has to be one of the most popular with our visitors." CYLI is a grant-funded venture that provides after-school programming to students in Allegany and Western Steuben counties, free of charge. The program's goal is to encourage students to attend college after high school graduation. "Though Alfred University hosts our program, we do not encourage visitors to come to AU specifically," said Romanchock. "Our hope is that the visits will make the youths more comfortable with college in general," he added. After the program ended (with ice cream made with liquid nitrogen), the visiting students stopped by AU's dining hall for dinner. The children were impressed with the quality, quantity and diversity of food offered, though it seemed that pizza was the choice of most. "The kids are like the locusts from the Bible, they come through and decimate the pizza and French fries," said Nick Rampersad, a sophomore history major at AU and a CYLI staff member. "For most of them, dinner is their favorite part of the visit!" Rampersad is a son of Beverly Felmine of Brooklyn, and Brian Rampersad of Jackson Heights, NY. He is a graduate of Midwood High School at Brooklyn College. Since September 2008, CYLI has hosted over 300 Allegany County youth during weekly programs on topics ranging from equestrian science to chess. Students from Andover, Bolivar Richburg, Belfast, Scio, and Canaseraga central schools as well as from ICS have attended programming. If you are an educator or community leader and would like information on attending a CYLI event in the future, please contact Romanchock at 607.871.2700.