

The Foothills Focus

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in North Maricopa County

CCUSD partners with Lowell Observatory for 'Unlocking the Keys to Science'

CAVE CREEK – Cave Creek Unified School District preschoolers are "Unlocking the Keys to Science" with the help of Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff. CCUSD's Education and Community Services Department are collaborating on the expansion of Lowell Observatory's hands-on science program, Lowell Observatory Curriculum for Kids (LOCKS), "Unlocking the Keys to Science" at the ECS Child's Play Preschool site at Horseshoe Trails Elementary School.



Vickilyn Hussey photo
Pictured: A Horseshoe Trails Elementary preschooler learns about magnets as part of the preschool's hands-on science program.

"It is never too early to start STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education, and we were so fortunate to

form a partnership with Lowell Observatory," said Gina Durbin, Director of Education and Community Services in CCUSD. "Research is very clear that best practices in early childhood education is to allow for more play and inquiry-based investigation."

The LOCKS classroom program was introduced at ECS during the 2015-2016 school year, followed by a two-week ECS Summer Camp in 2016.

"One of our community members, Tom Ensign, who has

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Eclipse 2017



Photo courtesy of Jenni Wright
Valley resident Jenni Wright took this amazing photo during the eclipse on Monday. See more about the eclipse on pg. 10.

Suspect arrested on charges of unlawful burning, weapons misconduct, and assault

BLACK CANYON CITY – The Yavapai County Sheriff's Office has booked 54-year-old Scott Wayne on multiple charges, after a domestic violence incident, illegal burning, and weapons misconduct, according to a news release from YCSO.

On Aug. 20, Wayne was booked into the Camp Verde Detention Center on charges including Weapons Misconduct/Prohibited Possessor, Unlawful Wildland Burning, Aggravated Assault per Domestic Violence, Disorderly Conduct per Domestic

Violence, and Threatening per Domestic Violence, YCSO stated. He is also being held on a felony Aggravated Assault warrant out of California, according to YCSO.

YCSO's news release stated that on Sunday morning, Wayne's girlfriend reported a domestic violence incident involving a firearm, occurring at their residence. The YCSO news release reported that Wayne threatened his girlfriend

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Learn emergency preparation techniques at CERT training, starting Sept. 7



Photo courtesy of DMFD Citizen Corps
Pictured: Paul Schickel, DMFD Community Services Program Coordinator, directs team members at a drill briefing.

**ELIZABETH MEDORA
STAFF**

NORTH VALLEY – Learn how to be prepared for emergencies at Daisy Mountain Fire Department's latest Community Emergency Response Team training course, starting Sept. 7 and running eight consecutive Thursday evenings. Classes will be held at DMFD Station 141. Each class will run 7-10 p.m.

The training is provided free

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worked in various positions within the scientific field, brought this opportunity to ECS," explained Durbin.

In 2016-2017, the LOCKs program became a weekly part of the ECS Child's Play Preschool curriculum at HTES. The LOCKs program at Lowell Observatory is offered as a monthly camp that children attend with their parents.

"The vision was to expand the program, to provide more children access to LOCKs, because not everyone can come to Mars Hill [Flagstaff]. And, expand it in a way that didn't require bricks and mortar," said Tom Ensign, Member of the Executive Committee of Lowell Observatory. "One of the key people is Gina Durbin, Director of Education & Community Services, who has been a champion of Lowell Observatory LOCKs and a supporter. She facilitated the use of LOCKs kits as a study."

With Durbin's support, ECS Child's Play Preschool teacher Kathy Grandprey worked with Samantha Flagg, Lowell Observatory Education Coordinator and developer of the LOCKs program, to integrate the Lowell Observatory curriculum into the more traditional preschool curriculum. Lowell Observatory's Samantha Gorney,

Deputy Director of Education and Kelly Ferguson, Education Coordinator, continued development of the program after Flagg relocated to Tucson in fall of 2016.

"We had a wonderful teacher in Kathy Grandprey," said Ensign. "For example, for the curriculum on Newton's Law, she introduced coloring books with Newton sitting under an apple tree. So while the students were learning, we learned a new way to use the curriculum."

With their teachers' close guidance and supervision, students perform scientific testing, conducting experiments and guided investigations in life, physical, and Earth and space sciences.

The preschool lesson plans can easily run five pages per lesson. Lowell Observatory provides all the required material to perform the scientific investigations and experiments. Each lesson plan takes a week to cover. Lowell plans to add a video to the lesson package sometime in the future.

"We studied Dwarf Planets in August, Newton's Law in September, and Constellations in October," said Grandprey, who teaches the pilot LOCKs program. "Lowell sends me one to three boxes every month, with everything I need, from paper, paint, Styrofoam balls, bottles, magnets, marbles, tins, foam noodles...everything. "



Pictured: Kathy Grandprey, ECS Child's Play Preschool teacher at Horseshoe Trails Elementary, works with preschoolers on LOCKs activities.

Learning to recognize constellations by using toothpicks and marshmallows, essentially training the mind to see images created by alignment of the stars, was one of the students' favorite investigations. A recent project with magnets and paint required the students to move a magnet through paint inside a metal tin by moving a magnet underneath the tin.

"It's important to instill a love of learning as early as you can," Grandprey said. "I hope by exploring our world, their world, it makes them hungry for more."

"Providing this kind of learning early in a child's life builds skills and interests that serve children throughout their school years, and later in life," explained Durbin. "We certainly need more individuals choosing science, technology, medicine and engineering as a career."

"With LOCKs, I think the best way to go is horizontal, introducing the program to as many preschools as possible," said Ensign, who with his wife Laura has been working together to develop independent funding for LOCKs within CCUSD.

"CCUSD starts our youngest learners with quality learning programs like LOCKs," noted Dr. Debbi Burdick, CCUSD Superintendent. "We are fortunate to have our preschool students engaged in this interactive and engaging program as they start to formalize STEM concepts for future learning and interests!"

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