

Getting students involved

Western U.P. Center teaches using varied events, programs

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HOUGHTON - More than 11,400 people have been reached through the Western U.P. Center for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education and the number is expected to grow.

In December, the center released the program participation summary of July 2009 through June 2010 to the Copper Country Intermediate School District, which included 11,475 participants involved in the various programs put on by the center.

"We have so many participants from many schools," said Joan Chadde, education program coordinator for WUPCSMEE.

Throughout the year, the center holds various events, such as the Get Wise Program, Family Adventure Hikes and the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative.

LSSI started in January 2008 and Chadde said funding for the project is anticipated for 10 years.

"It's a very innovative project and it's a statewide effort to engage students in Great Lakes stewardship," she said. "It's getting students involved where they feel like their contributions are valued by their community."

Projects with the Lake Superior Stewardship Initiative range from creating rain gardens and vegetables gardens to beach cleanup and bird monitoring. Fifteen schools, 77 K-12 teachers, 1,558 K-12 students and 105 community organizations were all involved with the LSSI.

The Family Science Program involved 21 family events, including math and engineering nights and forest events, and drew 2,130 students and parents.

"Every elementary school in the Copper Country Intermediate School District has at least one family science, or forest, or engineering event," Chadde said. "Those events are put on by Michigan Technology University students as role models in science and engineering."

Chadde said the events have become something students and families look forward to doing. The idea is also to create an interest in science and engineering.

"Families look forward to these learning events with their children," she said.

Assembly programs involved 1,960 students and are an opportunity to engage students in a fun way of learning by incorporating a presenter from somewhere else, she said.

"They're varied in literature, arts and live animals to have students get excited for learning about science," Chadde said.

The K-12 Teacher Professional Development workshops drew 537 teachers for 669 hours of work over 40 workshops, and K-12 Teacher Summer Institutes, one-week institutes including 85 teachers, covered a range of topics from Great Lakes maritime transportation to future fuels from forests.

Other programs include Lake Superior scientific excursions, the TiViTz program and tournament, outdoor science investigations and the Western U.P. Science Fair and Festival.

The Western U.P. Center served as one of the 10 regional sites in Michigan for the Algebra for All Initiative. The statewide initiative was endorsed by the governor's office and involved more than 1,000 teachers statewide.

Shawn Oppliger, director for WUPCSMEE, said the program involved Algebra I teachers.

"It started in the 2009-10 school year," she said. "Our center is one of the 10 sites."

Oppliger said teachers look at their content expectations that drives their curriculum.

"The state sets down these expectations that all teachers are supposed to teach in the state of Michigan," she said. "Through a functions approach, it helps teachers teach in mathematics. It really helps to build student understanding of the content in Algebra I."

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