



SCIENCE FIRSTHAND – PARTNERS IN DISCOVERY

SCIENCE FIRSTHAND NEWS - JUNE 2007

SCIENCE FIRSTHAND 2006-2007: OBSERVATIONS

Many doors to discovery have opened this school year for the Science Firsthand mentors, youth, and staff. New collaborations, mentors, partner sites, and students provided opportunities for growth in our second year.

We expanded Science Firsthand by offering the program at Harvey Austin (a Buffalo Public School after-school program), Seneca Street United Methodist Church, and the Babcock Boys & Girls Club. Mentors continued to meet with students at T.J. Dulski, Polonia Hall, FLARE, and the Valley Community Center. Some youth/mentor teams completed their second year together, and new teams started at all of the sites. Although the number of sites increased by three, the number of students and mentors doubled.



In the first year of Science Firsthand, mentoring teams were primarily one-to-one. However, the number of students who became interested in Science Firsthand outpaced the number of mentors we were able to recruit. This year, we began small group mentoring teams. Mentors worked together with a very small number of students, with a ratio of about 2 or 3 to 1. For some sites and some students, this was a very positive solution. Students enjoyed being part of the small group, and sharing their experiences. The mentors enjoyed the support and collaboration with the other mentor/s in their team.

Science Firsthand's mentors were very committed. Several continued from last year: Richard Butz, Pat Rogers and Mary Hughes at the Valley Community Center, Rose Cianciosa and Lucy Roth at Polonia Hall, and Don Adams, Drexel Andrews, Liz Wells and Tariq Hakim who moved to new centers with new students. We welcomed new volunteers from Greater Buffalo Savings Bank - Nicole Stewart, Ryan Casullo, Cory Haslam and Lisa Akers; from the FBI - Lafaesa Killian and Vanita Evans; students from the UB Geosciences program - interns Kim Stilson, Erikson Neilens and Monica Ridgeway; from Daemen College Service Learners - Debbie, Julie, Leslie and Kat; Sarah Bowman, a graduate Social Work student from UB; volunteers from Honeywell - scientists Kevin Uhrich, Selma Bektesevic, Velma Rajesh Dubey, Justin Becker, Greg Shafer and Dave Nalewajek; from Seneca Street United Methodist Church - Karen and Ben Little; from Buffalo State College - Shiela Christopher; from Roswell Park Cancer Inst. - Rosemary Elliott; from Mudpies Children's Museum - Bonny Ryder; from Parkside Community Assoc.- Jack Anthony. We are very grateful for their commitment to Science Firsthand and the energy they and their young partners devoted to making discoveries.

YOUNG INVESTIGATORS CONFERENCE 2007

On April 29th students, mentors and families from the community centers that participated in Science Firsthand gathered at the Buffalo Zoo to share in the investigations that SF teams had done throughout the year. The teams prepared posters, examples of their work and activities so everyone could learn about SF and try the investigations themselves. The event was open to the public and zoo visitors also attended. Families had



an opportunity to explore the zoo together and try zoo-related scavenger hunts, with a cookie reward (cookies donated by the Petri Baking Co.). The mentors engaged families from all of the SF sites in the explorations they had been doing with their mentees. It was great to see adults and children making ram air cars and slime, and investigating tadpoles. A Science Firsthand bus provided shuttle service throughout the day to and from the centers to the zoo. Thank you to the center directors, parents and mentors who promoted this event. Thank you also, to volunteer driver Paul Ruhland for driving the Valley bus. We are already looking forward to the next conference.

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Science Firsthand is an NSF-sponsored project that provides urban community centers with a unique resource for involving middle school youth with science during out-of-school time; opportunities for hands-on, student driven investigation through a mentoring relationship.



Contact Marilyn Sozanski at marilyn.sozanski@gmail.com, or Bill Rogers at billroger@gmail.com; or call 831-8722. If you are thinking about becoming a mentor, feel free to join us.



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FIELD TRIPS

Students from Polonia Hall visited Mills Welding Company as guests of Wayne Bacon. The presentation was fascinating to the adults and the mentees. The various gases used in industry (dry ice and liquid nitrogen) were examined, and one of the results was delicious strawberry ice cream. The Science Firsthand students and chaperones also visited the Iroquois Nature Preserve.

SCIENCE FIRSTHAND SUMMER 2007

Gardening, a magical and necessary science, will be the focus of the Science Firsthand summer activities. Students from the different centers will have the opportunity to participate in community gardening projects in the city. The Food Bank Community Garden Project has reserved a bed for students from Polonia and Dulski and the students from FLARE will adopt a bed at People's Park on Main Street. If you are a gardener and would like to share your skills, please consider being a summer volunteer with Science Firsthand. Children are amazed when they are able to grow vegetables and flowers and the lessons learned go far beyond the products that result from gardening.

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Buffalo has many groups that are serving students in very diverse ways. We have been fortunate in forming relationships with coalitions and business partners who are supporting hands-on science mentoring. The WNY Service Learning Coalition is a link to the institutions of higher education, helping Science Firsthand identify students who are interested in this experience and enabling us to provide a meaningful opportunity for them. The new Compeer Mentoring Collaborative affords Science Firsthand interaction with other mentoring organizations, maximizing resources for all of the groups. Greater Buffalo Savings Bank, the FBI and Honeywell have recruited mentors on our behalf. And the University of Buffalo has provided interns as mentors for the second year. Next year, we hope to expand these partnerships, for the benefit of the mentors and the children.

INVESTIGATIONS

Each Science Firsthand team pursued a variety of explorations. For instance, at Seneca Street United Methodist Church, scavenger hunts through abandoned lots provided an abundance of investigations. Students scoured these area to find the items on the list and just as often as not, discovering fascinating plants, animals and insects not on the list. Air currents were examined through bubbles, paper airplanes and kites. Insects of various kinds were housed at the centers for observation. Other investigations focused on:

Surface tension Hero engines Clay boats Plants and seeds
Birds Tops Coca Cola fizz Clocks Rocks Flower bulbs

And many, many more...

MENTOR INVESTIGATION MEETINGS

Mentors, what have you done this year that you would like to share with other mentors? You are invited to spend time with others exploring ideas for investigations. Let us know what you are interested in and what times are best for you. Weekdays – mornings, afternoons, evenings. Weekend – mornings, afternoons. The location will be either the TriMain Center or one of Science Firsthand's Community partners.