



Hickory Creek third-graders constructed detailed versions of the solar system for the recent Family STEM Night. Second-grade student Harley Peterson is excited about viewing the celestial display.

Margaret Hobbs photos

Hickory Creek holds Family STEM Night

BY **MARGARET HOBBS**
Lifestyles Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics, commonly known as STEM, was the focus for Hickory Creek's Family STEM Night.

Organizer and teacher Stormy Hall said, "The event is a great opportunity for students and their families to explore the different areas of STEM. We tried to offer many different activities for each area which included activities created by teachers and a variety of visitors from our community."

In an effort to send the message of the importance of the STEM fields, several hands-on and minds-on activities were available for guests to enjoy.

The Escape Room activity was a popular spot, with the goal being able to open a box of locks after earning the key through various activities.

"This activity does involve teamwork, math and problem solving skills and determination," said fifth-grade teacher Becky Collier. "Part of the reason this is popular is because it's similar to some of their video games."

Attendees were exposed to beekeeping, entomology, robots, droids, planetariums and electricity, just to name a few of the activities. Many of these were made available through the kindness of community volunteers.

"We are very appreciative of the many people in the community who helped us out tonight," said Hall. "We

had to reschedule because of bad weather, and they worked very well with our situation."

Nadeer Youssef with the TSU Nursery Research Station amazed many with his large collection of insects coming from all around the world. Since his father was an entomologist, he has much exposure to insect facts.

"Insects are important because they affect most aspects of our lives," said Youssef. "They all have an ecological purpose."

An informative presentation concerning bees was presented by beekeeper Danny Cummings.

"Beekeeping is a big challenge," said Cummings. "I have been working with them for almost four years, after getting information from a friend, and just fell in love with the hobby."

He shared his beekeeping materials, as well as an actual hive with the students, letting some of them put on his beekeeper hat.

One of the more challenging spots was the STEM boat building activity. Children viewed a video to learn the design process before actually constructing a boat using straws, paper, foil and craft stick. The challenge is that boat must float for a minute while holding one passenger.

"It's important to get students interested in STEM at a young age so they will hopefully pursue a future career in STEM," said Hall. "STEM is an important part of our future workforce, and our students are our future."



A unique collection of moths belonging to Nadeer Youssef catches the attention of Ava Elam. Youssef shared his displays with Family STEM Night visitors, explaining the many benefits of insects in our lives.



Marshal Scott's handmade boat passes the test, floating over a minute while holding one passenger.



Duane Farnum and third-grade student Maci McBride have fun flying a simulated drone in his exhibit.



Kindergarten student Randal McCarver is happy to be able to learn about beekeeping from Danny Cummings, and to be chosen to try his specially designed beekeeper hat.