

Emerging Scientists



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A preschool student participates recently in the Catawba Science Center's Emerging Scientist program, sponsored in part by the Community Foundation of Burke County.

Preschoolers learn to love science at Hickory center

FROM STAFF REPORTS
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A group of 69 pre-schoolers from Chesterfield, Forest Hill and Mountain Crest Elementary schools completed a series of hands-on science programs sponsored by the Community Foundation of Burke County as part of the Emerging Scientist program at the Catawba Science Center.

CSC educators worked with Burke County preschool classes, and students received two STEM programs — science, technology, engineering and math — each month during the past year in coordination with the program.

Located in Hickory, the CSC is a nonprofit science and technology museum that serves western North Carolina. It provided programs for more than 53,000

school children from 24 counties last year.

Children learned about subjects including magnets, light and sound, the ocean, farm animals and more. They played games, recognized shapes and colors, practiced math skills and increased their vocabularies.

CSC Executive Director Alan Barnhardt said teachers noticed how these classes engaged their students and reinforced academic understanding of subjects covered by the programs.

They witnessed growth in the children's knowledge of and interest in science. Barnhardt said teachers repeatedly mentioned how the programs provided them with access to materials that are not available through their school system.

"It's amazing to see how

the classes are making a difference in the children's lives," Barnhardt said. "We hope future funding will expand this opportunity to other children in Burke County."

During a review of classroom engagement with teachers, Barnhardt said most commented on the growth in students' knowledge of the subject, and that many parents said their children talked to them about the classes. With every program, he said pre-schoolers gave more detailed and correct responses after the programs.

The CSC is funded in part by the United Arts Fund of Catawba County and the NC Grassroots Science Museums Collaborative. For more information, visit www.catawbascience.org or call 828-322-8169.