

Community Foundation of Burke County

Grant helps students explore science

Special to The News Herald

Kelly Sizemore, a Mountain Crest Elementary School pre-k teacher, had just reminded her class that a Catawba Science Center educator would be visiting with them today.

The children were squirming in their chairs with the thought of new experiences that were about to unfold. They knew that educators from Catawba Science Center always brought new stories and fun things to explore.

This morning the subject was about oceans and the creatures that could be found there. Sizemore invited the children to sit so that Barbara, the science center educator, could read them a story.

She started by asking the children "What lives in the ocean?" The children responded enthusiastically by calling out, "Fish, dolphins and sharks!" Barbara smiled and pulled out a book which included large pictures of many new animals.

She read to the children and explained how the water in the ocean was salty. Most of these children had never been to the beach, yet alone been splashed by a wave.

They learned about new creatures; how animals that live under water have gills to breathe and how



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pre-kindergarten students at Mountain Crest Elementary School learn about life in the ocean.

other animals must carry air with them.

The children gathered closer as Barbara brought out several baskets filled with toys which included species of aquatic animals and plants. The children then began to make up stories based on the new information they were learning.

Some played with the shark puppets while others imagined dolphins, rays and other fish swimming together. Sizemore, Barbara and several adult volunteers mingled with the children and helped them explore this new world of science.

After about 40 minutes, Barbara gathered the children and asked them follow-up questions.

Naturally, they remembered the sharks, dolphins and fish from the begin-

ning of the program.

But, now they showed their enthusiasm by talking about whales, squid, sea stars and seahorses. One child remembered that Nemo, from the movie "Finding Nemo," was orange and, with some coaxing, remembered that Nemo was a clownfish.

Children at Mountain Crest and Chesterfield elementary schools are enjoying a series of science

programs this year thanks to a grant provided by the Ann Cornwell Patton and George Thomas Cornwell Endowment Fund, which is administered by the Community Foundation of Burke County.

This grant has enabled the children to explore many new science subjects in an environment that encourages informal, problem-based thinking.

This method of learning has been proven to assist children during this early developmental stage of their lives.

Perhaps, as a result of this learning experience, some of these children will become our next generation of scientists, technicians and business owners.

The CFBC is accepting notification of intent submissions for its 2013 grant cycle.

Call Nancy Taylor, executive director, at 828-437-7105 or go to cfburkecounty.org