Little Scientists

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“I saw a need. There were plenty of arts- and sports-related community programs, but nothing for science,” said Nathan Fell, who is a science teacher at Ramsey Middle School. Fell, along with the Student Science Association, saw a need for science in the community in St. Paul, and created the “First Saturday Science” program. This program occurs the first Saturday of every month, and is located at the Dayton’s Bluff Library at Metropolitan State University. The purpose of the First Saturday Science program is to expose children in underrepresented communities to science, and to present it as a realistic career choice for girls and people of color. The program focuses on shaping the community and helping nurture and instill a love of science into children.

Each month marks a different theme for science exploration, and any school-aged scientist is welcome to participate. The topics range from ecology and the study of how different organisms relate with their physical surroundings to food and different chemical reactions that can occur. When asked about participation, Fell stated that “kids should get involved for a number of reasons.” To which he added, “It’s free, it’s hands-on, and you get to keep what you build. Every family also gets a free book.”

Metropolitan State University is one of the few colleges that has a program that caters to helping develop a love of science in young people. One of the goals that Fell has is that the success of the First Saturday Science program might motivate other universities to create a program of their own, and that Metro State will be able to blaze a path that others might follow.

It is through these hands-on activities that children are able to learn and become involved in science and the community, but it is the participation of the children themselves that keeps the program alive. According to Fell, it is “the enthusiasm of the students, no matter the subject” that keeps him involved in the program. “[The children’s] enthusiastic curiosity was all I needed to keep going,” he added. Children love to ask questions and are always interested in why things work the way they do. The First Saturday Science program strives to give the answers, and explain to children the “why” behind science. Check out the Student Science Association’s Orgsync for further details.

