



The GALACTIC Stars Newsletter

February 2012



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Trivia Night

Mark your calendars now for our GALACTIC Trivia Night, scheduled for February 10. It will take place at the HSD Learning Center and doors will open at 6:00 p.m. Last year, we had to turn families away because we filled up the multi-purpose room, so be sure to send your reservation in early. Tables will cost \$48 (or \$8 per person for a six-person table) and of course, snacks will be sold or families can bring their own. We will sell soda, juice and water, plus popcorn and candy.

All of the trivia categories will interest GALACTIC students as well as adults. Each team must have two or more children to compete to win any of the prizes, otherwise, any team can play. Please contact the GALACTIC office at (314) 953-4954 if you have time to volunteer and more importantly, reserve the date. A more detailed flyer is included (see separate flyer) in this newsletter. The booster club exists to support our students, and specifically, these funds will go toward a goal for next year – adding another piece of playground equipment.

If there are any former GALACTIC students in your family who now attend high school and need community service hours, please have them call our office at (314) 953-4954. We could especially use a few volunteers for trivia night. They would need to be here from 5:00 until 9:00 p.m., so they could earn four hours and have fun, too.

Booster Club News

You are ALWAYS invited to our booster club meetings if you want to join and help us with important events. This year's officers are Carmen Lake, president; Jenny Rosansky, vice president; Rose Booher, treasurer; and Amy Marxkors, secretary. We send e-mail reminders about meetings/events to all members who share their e-mail addresses and request this information. The next meeting is Thursday, March 1 at 6:00 p.m. in our lounge here at the Hazelwood School District Learning Center.

Gifted Ed Press offers a complimentary copy of Gifted Education Press Quarterly. Interested parents would need to e-mail directly to receive the Winter 2012 issue. The e-mail address is gifted@giftededpress.com

If you would like to look over a sample issue, you may view the Summer 2011 issue at <http://www.giftededpress.com/GEPQSUMMER2011.pdf>

Dates to Remember

February 3	PTA Founders' Day Dinner at Hazelwood Central	6:00 p.m.
February 11	Trivia Night – HSD Learning Center	6:00 p.m.
March 15, 16	GALACTIC Parent-Teacher Conferences	Come when you are able

Project MEGSSS Gifted Math Program Now Accepting Nominations

MEGSSS nomination season began January 1. This more than 30-year-old, parent-run, non-profit program, designed specifically for the gifted math student, has always been available to home schooled students as well. We currently have a number of home schooled students in our after-school program and many alumni, most of whom discovered MEGSSS “through the grapevine.” Because of the fluid nature of the home school community, we find reaching out through e-mail works best and we ask that you pass the following information along through whatever networks exist in your area.

Project MEGSSS works to discover, inspire and develop the talents of middle school students with extraordinary gifts in mathematics. We provide rigorous math enrichment in the summer as an introduction and prerequisite to our school year “after-school” classes. The experience of the entire program presents a very “deep and wide” course of math based on a curriculum designed for the gifted student, including three years of formal logic (propositional and predicate calculus)--just one of many topics that many bright students may not be exposed to until college. However, even attending our summer programs will introduce a student to topics such as formal logic, operational systems, probability and number theory, as well as allowing them to meet others with the same interests and intellectual ability. Financial aid is available to families of modest means. This opportunity is available to all qualified students regardless of race, color, gender, creed or national origin.

We are now accepting nominations of fifth and sixth grade students who have an interest in and talent for mathematics. We do accept nominations of precocious fourth graders and some seventh and eighth graders may also be interested in attending our summer programming, which serves well as enrichment. Parent information meetings will be held throughout the area during January through March. For more information or to nominate a child, please see our website at www.MEGSSS.org or contact me at the e-mail address below.

If you or any home schooling parent would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, there is a newsletter opt in link in the upper right corner of our home page. Mailings are infrequent and mainly occur during our nomination season. Please feel free to share this information with other home school lists outside of the St. Louis region. We find that home school families are generally more willing to travel for quality opportunities.

Best regards,

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Competitions Galore

Competitions are just one way to engage students in rigorous content and we have a lot of them going on during the next few months at GALACTIC.

First, we have our fourth and fifth graders who signed up for our LinguiSHTIK classes going to the Academic Challenge Cup, also sponsored by Gifted Resource Council of St. Louis. The event is from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday February 28, at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Our students have been practicing with Ms. Ziolkowski and Ms. Healy on parts of speech, creating complex or compound sentences and playing in mock tournaments, to prepare for this LinguiSHTIK competition.

Next, we will have two teams of second graders going to Creative Convention, sponsored by Gifted Resource Council, on Thursday, March 1 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Our students have been practicing creative thinking skills and presentation skills with Ms. Binuyo to prepare for this competition focused on creativity.

Then, we have our fourth and fifth graders who signed up for our equations class going to the Academic Challenge Cup, sponsored by Gifted Resource Council of St. Louis. The event is from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13, at Washington University. Our students have been practicing math computation skills, analyzing mathematical strategies and playing in mock tournaments with Ms. Schneider to prepare for this competition.

Parents are welcome to accompany our teams to all three of these competitions, but they must be at the Hazelwood Learning Center by 8:00 a.m. to board the buses that will transport students. While parents are not allowed onto the competition floor, there will be speakers presenting on various parenting issues and parents can view the final awards ceremony.

Finally, second grade pre-engineering students have been working to understand the challenge for this year's Junior FIRST LEGO League. The theme is "Snack Attack" and it involves food/health issues that will then be displayed and presented to the public. These students have been working with Ms. Ziolkowski to learn about programming and building with WeDo Lego equipment. Two teams will compete at the Jr. FIRST LEGO League Expo on Saturday, March 3 from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at Wedgwood Elementary School, 14275 New Halls Ferry Road. All are welcome.

Parent Education

In November, the GALACTIC Booster Club sponsored a guest speaker, Beverly Best, the former coordinator of gifted education in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. She spoke about many different issues surrounding parenting children who are gifted. There are other opportunities for parents, which are led by Dr. Agnes Meyo, a licensed psychologist working with gifted children and adults, and are free of charge. The meeting location is at 711 Old Ballas Road, St. Louis, MO 63141 on the first Thursday of each month, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Please call Celeste at (314) 780-3621 or e-mail Kathy Gavin at kbgavin@gmail.com if you have any questions. The topics and dates for remaining meetings this school year are below:

- Channeling Positive Perfectionism – Thursday, February 2
- Advancing Academic Success with Assistive Technology – Thursday, March 1
- Avoiding Bullying – Thursday, April 5
- Using Social Media – Thursday, May 3
- Managing Mood-Related Difficulties – Thursday, June 7

Two GALACTIC teams among 4 HSD teams to earn 2011 FIRST robotics awards

Four teams from the Hazelwood School District earned awards during the 2011 FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL) robotics qualifying competitions in the fall.

Two gifted education fifth grade teams, TechnoPickles and Brain Freeze, won a Programming Award and a Mechanical Design Award, respectively. Brain Freeze advanced to the FLL Championships, which took place at St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley in December. Teams from Hazelwood East Middle and Hazelwood North Middle schools also won awards.



Members of Brain Freeze, a GALACTIC fifth grade robotics team, show off the Mechanical Design award won during a FIRST LEGO League qualifying round this fall. From left are Miles Bradford, Louis Behlmann, Maya Wollberg, Nakayla Duke and Ashley Morton. Not pictured is Jonah Koch. The team advanced to the FLL Championships in December. Bradford wears a costume related to a skit the team performed for FIRST judges.

The mechanical design award recognizes a team that designs and develops a mechanically sound robot that is durable, efficient and capable. Gifted education teachers Mike Beck and Erin Skelly serve as co-coaches for the fifth grade teams.

“I felt happy about it. It took a lot of time to build a simple structure,” said Brain Freeze team member Nakayla Duke, who goes to Twillman Elementary. “Our robot, Papa, is sturdy, small, has interchangeable parts and is easy to service.”

“We had trouble deciding what Papa would look like and what attachments to use,” said Maya Wollberg, who attends Armstrong Elementary. “I like building robots. Instead of having to follow directions, you just get to build it yourself.”

“We have known each other for a long time,” said Louis Behlmann, who attends McCurdy Elementary. “We know a lot about each other and how to work together.”

“They are a lot more relaxed now and that helps,” said Beck. “If someone on the team forgets a line, someone else steps in and ad-libs it. By having these small teams, I think that works really well and I think we are planting seeds at the other schools.” Jonah Koch, who attends Sacred Heart Catholic School in Florissant, is also a member of Brain Freeze.

The programming award recognizes a team that uses outstanding programming principles, including clear, concise and reusable code that allows a robot to perform challenge missions successfully and consistently.

“Winning an award was surprising. I was pretty happy that we got one. I like robotics because I like to build robots,” said Christian Shabani, who attends Arrowpoint Elementary and who is a member of the Techno Pickles.

Sophie Thorp, who goes to Russell Elementary, attended a robotics camp this summer to help prepare for the qualifying competitions. “I thought the camp helped because I wouldn’t have been able to program as much as I have if I had not gone to summer camp,” she said.

“I was excited we won this award,” said Ben Canizales, who attends McCurdy Elementary. “I think we did better on the building than on the programming. We had three programs that became five but one kept messing up. The robot tried to wash its own arm. I thought we should have gotten points for that.”

This year’s challenge was called Food Factor. Students between 9 and 14 years old explored the topic of food safety and examined the possible points of contamination our food encounters – from exposure to insects and creatures, to unsterile processing and transportation, to unsanitary preparation and storage – then had to find ways to prevent or combat these contaminants.