OUR SCHOOLS

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEE’S SUMMIT R-7 SCHOOL DISTRICT
WE PREPARE EACH STUDENT FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE
NOVEMBER 2020 ISSUE

SPOTLIGHT ON INNOVATIVE LSR7
STUDENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS

NEW STA AEROSPACE ACADEMY PROGRAM

PHOTOS FROM AROUND LSR7

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE:
How LSR7 pioneers are shaping our world
SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

UNEXPECTED. EVER-EVOLVING. UNIQUE. UNPRECEDENTED.

Throughout this past year, I have used all these words to describe the times we are living in. But while 2020 has been challenging to say the least, the students, staff and school community in LSR7 have continued to thrive with new, innovative ideas and pioneering work.

This issue is all about that theme - pioneering. Pioneers exemplify grit as they deal with uncertainty. They devote time and energy to solving new problems. They examine issues, break down the components and build solutions from scratch.

There are countless stories of LSR7 school community members who have pioneered in new ways this year. The students and staff members featured in this issue are no exception.

Visit page 6 to learn about how LSR7’s Summit Technology Academy has collaborated with community partners to develop an Aerospace Academy that will be a one-of-a-kind program.

Read our feature on students and staff who have pioneered through the pandemic, developing innovative ways to deliver virtual instruction, piloting new ways to connect, and using talent, creativity and teamwork to create projects that have been locally and nationally recognized.

Reflect on the wisdom and the stories that middle school student Kay Haas and elementary music teacher Jazz Rucker share with us in our recurring “In My Words” series.

I believe that collaboration, connection and creativity will continue to see us through tough times. And in LSR7, our mission will continue to focus on expanding our capacity to equip every student for a successful future, whether that future means catching the attention of NASA, learning a new and sought-after skill set in the aerospace industry or simply knowing how to efficiently problem-solve when a challenge lies ahead.

Thank you, LSR7, for being partners in pioneering with us during this unexpected fall season. I am eager to move forward together toward our bright future. 

With much appreciation,
DAVID BUCK, Ed. D
SUPERINTENDENT
KAY HAAS

Kay Haas, a seventh-grade student at Bernard Campbell Middle School, engages in a variety of extracurricular activities. She serves on Student Council, plays the oboe and earns top recognition in Aeralympics, which features aerial artists performing with silks and other materials.

Aeralympics is not too much different than a dance competition, just with silks and aerial stuff. I climb the silks. I can do different moves. I can do splits in the air. I’m working a lot on my strength, doing no-handed climbs and a one-arm hang. I wrap, and I can do drops from it.

I think the thing that most draws me to Aeralympics is first of all the challenge. I love learning new things like doing a cool shake or a new drop or a dive or something like that and learning new routines.

I love doing aerial silks. I’m very proud - I got first place this year in Intermediate Silks Junior.

Of course I’m disappointed that I couldn’t go to Bernard Campbell because I was really excited to go to middle school and switch classes and have a locker, but I think we’re going to have to make the best out of it. There’s been a couple of bumps in online learning, but I think we’re working it out so far.

I think the COVID-19 pandemic pushed me to grow through technology. Before COVID-19 and quarantine, I barely knew how to delete something from Google Drive, but now I know all the shortcuts on my computer to switch tabs easily or split the screen. I organized all my classes in Schoology, so that’s made it a lot more helpful.

I like playing the oboe because I think it sounds really pretty. I can do really high notes and really low notes; it matches so perfectly together.

I think I chose it over all the other instruments because one of the things that really caught my eye about the oboe was it’s so funky and different. Nobody at my elementary school played the oboe, so I felt like it was something different.

I want people to know that you can do anything, even if it’s as crazy as aerial silks or if it’s as simple as talking to someone.

I grew up singing in church and school. My sophomore year of high school, I auditioned for a national honors choir. I was fortunate enough to be selected for that honor. When I got there, the guest conductor for the honors group was a Black man. It’s the first time that I’d ever seen a Black male conduct choir that wasn’t a gospel choir at a church. That was kind of an awakening for me. “Wow, this is something that I can turn into a career.”

I can have an off-the-wall personality and be goofy and funny and be fun and bring students to the content, but I’d rather have the music-making be the fun part. If I can get to the point where students are clapping at the bit to get in this room because we make music, then that to me is ultimate success.

I can see that I’m able to do teaching virtually is to connect with students in a more individualized fashion than I have ever had the opportunity before. When students are turning in work, typically that would sound like a whole group of people singing or playing instruments, but now it’s just that specific student’s voice or thoughts I’m hearing. I think I’m really able to connect more with students, as ironic as it may seem, in this virtual format, which makes me even more excited that once students are able to return to the building to already have the ground footing of the relationship built in that way.

JAZZ RUCKER

Mr. Rucker, music teacher at Richarderson Elementary, is starting his third year in the Lee’s Summit R-7 School District and his 10th year in education.

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What I want people to know about me is my belief is that all people are fully capable, fully valued and fully human. That’s what drives me every single day. If I’m having the worst day with the toughest of students, I remember — fully capable, fully valued, fully human.
Although pilots are most often associated with flying, there are many other lucrative aerospace career opportunities.

Starting in 2021-2022, Summit Technology Academy will expand its Digital Electronics and Aerospace Engineering course into a larger program, Aerospace Academy. Partnering with Aircraft Electronics Association and the University of Central Missouri, this program will offer top industry resources and expertise.

Students will learn flight and electronic principles as juniors and then as seniors focus on one of seven aspects of aviation.

“High-tech talent is in high demand, and advances in air and space travel are expected to spur job growth. If you’re going to go to the training that allows them to fly safely across the sky,” said STA Director/Principal Dr. Jeremy Bonnens. “And you’re going to be a well-prepared pilot if you understand maintenance and the behind-the-scenes aspects of aviation.”

The program is also an investment in the Lee’s Summit Municipal Airport and the community. Research suggests airports grow when they incorporate educational services.

Aircraft Electronics Association, which provides industry training, supported LSR7 students before this program through career days with middle school students. AEA will donate aerospace equipment through its educational foundation, including an electronic flight instrument system, radio equipment, antennas, wiring, tool benches, tool sets and more.

AEA President/CEO Mr. Mike Adamson said an aerospace career might appeal to students who are interested in computers, and it doesn’t necessarily require a four-year college degree.

“The best part is if they’re averse to sitting at a desk all day, if they’re curious how things work, and if they have a mechanical aptitude, this is a perfect career for them,” says Mr. Adamson.

The University of Central Missouri, which has an aviation program dating back to the 1970s, will share expertise, connections and resources with STA.

“We want to leverage what UCM has, and we want to leverage what the industry has, plus students have the opportunity to continue through UCM after high school,” says Mr. Joe Mullins, UCM consultant in workforce and professional education.

Mr. Adamson says the marvel of flight continues throughout one’s aerospace career.

“I think it’s a natural reaction to look up in the sky when you hear an airplane fly over. It’s the curiosity of how that works. When you get into this industry and you get that experience, you’ll understand why and how, and you’re responsible for that particular aircraft flying. There’s no greater sense of pride. You have people’s lives in your hands, and you have repaired, installed or maintained something that allows them to fly safely across the sky.”

SUMMIT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY PREPARES TO LAUNCH AEROSPACE CAREERS

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From troubleshooting space travel challenges to closing the gender gap in science to reinventing education in a global pandemic, our LSR7 students and staff pioneer.

LSR7 PIONEERS CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD OUR FUTURE

Each space venture has a price tag, but one element is priceless — the astronauts’ health and safety.

Tasked with designing headgear for protection against radiation during deep space exploration, five students from Lee’s Summit West High School won top recognition in NASA’s Wearable Equipment for Averting Radiation (WEAR) Challenge.

Made up of Kate Boosman, Hana Elkishawi, Safa Huq, Pierce Jacoby and Steicy Lopez (former LSW student), the team was one of four chosen nationwide.

The competition supports NASA’s Artemis program, which seeks to land the first woman and next man on the Moon by 2024 and launch sustainable lunar exploration by 2028 through NASA’s commercial and international partners.

Starting before winter break, the group worked through the COVID-19 school closure. The team identified hydrogen as effective protection against radiation, and they put water sacs into the headgear fabric. They submitted a video explanation to NASA in March and then improved the headgear and submitted another video in April.

NASA chose the team as one of four national finalists, and the students would have visited NASA to present the project if COVID-19 hadn’t changed plans.

“I don’t think any of us expected to make it this far just because our school has never done this competition, and there are some schools that compete in it a lot,” Kate Boosman says.

Kate praised LSR7 for providing a well-rounded education.

“There are so many class options that you can take, especially in high school.” Kate says “You can explore all sorts of different career possibilities you can have in the future.”

WORKING TO MAKE DEEP SPACE TRAVEL SAFER

Kate Boosman, Safa Huq, Pierce Jacoby, Hana Elkishawi, and Steicy Lopez (not pictured) from Lee’s Summit West High School designed headgear for protection against radiation during deep space exploration as part of a NASA competition.

Lee’s Summit West High School was one of four finalists in NASA’s WEAR Challenge.

Each team was given $3,000 and an additional $5,000 if they won.

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EMPOWERING GIRLS TO BECOME LEADERS IN TECH

James Moore from Lee’s Summit North High School successfully built a space prototype.

With no time and little budget, he learned how to rewrite a mistake in manufactured electronic equipment. He also adapted a new programming language he then had to explain to the challenge’s organizers.

“More than just technical knowledge, where I think I really grew in my understanding was this project management because I had a set deadline and budget, and I hadn’t really had to work with that before,” James said. James hopes this success is a step toward his dream of going into space for the purpose of science, to me that’s something,” James said. “That’s the only way I can fulfill my objective about a force acting on the International Space Station (ISS), he earned national attention for his objective to design a space prototype to join an email newsletter to reach more girls and a newsletter to reach more girls.

EMPOWERING GIRLS TO BECOME LEADERS IN TECH

James Moore from Lee’s Summit North High School successfully built a space prototype to join an experiment set to launch to the International Space Station in 2021.

Girls Who Code Lee’s Summit is working to close the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Brooklyn Howery (Trailridge Elementary), Rori Howery (Lee’s Summit West High School), Bethany Danley (LSW), Brianna Nguyen (LSH), and Ava Yang (Summit Lakes Middle School) met outside to take a photo during a brief mentoring session.

Facing the challenge of COVID-19, the girls found an opportunity: an email newsletter to reach more girls (subscribe at lsr7.org/girlswhocode). The newsletter includes engaging activities to teach the basics of coding and to spark interest in STEM.

This year’s group leaders are Eleanor Ammerman (Lee’s Summit High School), Bethany Danley (Lee’s Summit West High School), Annabelle Franke (LSHS), Rori Howery (LSW), Brianna Nguyen (LSW) and Zozy Sears (LSHS).

“COVID-19 has obviously thrown a lot of obstacles into our path, but ultimately with time and support we can find a way over it,” says Eleanor Ammerman. “It’s very similar to coding in that way of when something doesn’t work, you try something new, and when something gets hurled into your path you find a different way around it.”

The group’s inclusive definition of success recognizes the simple power of encouragement.

“Reaching a large amount of people and getting a very big reaction out of our newsletter has been very rewarding but I think the most satisfying thing when we’re mentoring a girl is when you just explain it to her in a slightly different way, and she finally understand and she gets excited about the code and her next activities,” Eleanor says. “She gets excited to come back.”

ENGINEERING A PROTOTYPE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

Using just $50, off-the-shelf equipment and the science standard for the most basic computer, James Moore from Lee’s Summit North High School successfully built a space prototype.

This past spring, as many people tried to stay busy during the COVID-19 pandemic, James found his outlet: the computer (Cyber Opportunity that Merges Programming, Understanding, and Testing for Experiments and Research) Challenge through the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

After identifying, testing and proving his scientific objective about a force acting on the International Space Station (ISS), he earned national attention for his prototype. It will be part of an experiment through the U.S. Space and Missile Defense Command, which launches to the ISS in 2021.

“I want to be doing something. I want to be building something,” James said. “That’s the only way I can fulfill myself.”

James credits the Lee’s Summit North Students for the Exploration and Development of Space, a local chapter of the national SEDS-USA, which shared design advice with him.

Even before he could address out-of-this-world engineering problems, he had to fix Earth-side headaches.

Outdated gender stereotypes and a global pandemic are no match for a group of girls working to expand the pool of future tech talents.

Even before COVID-19, Girls Who Code Lee’s Summit faced a steep challenge in helping to close the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Nevertheless, they organized mentoring sessions at schools around LSR7 to connect with young girls before they felt societal pressure discouraging them from exploring STEM.

With no time and little budget, he learned how to rewrite a mistake in manufactured electronic equipment. He also adapted a new programming language he then had to explain to the challenge’s organizers.

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ADAPTING MUSIC INSTRUCTION

LSR7 values music education,” Ms. Rowland says. “They value feedback and the need for kids to get instant feedback. They realize teachers teach the tools and the tools support our students, but we are ultimately there to be the guides. SmartMusic is a tremendous investment in our students.”

Mr. Scott Kuhlman, a district band director and teacher, leads a virtual saxophone class with middle school students.

During the spring school closure, teachers tested the SmartMusic web program, which streamlines music practice by giving feedback on performers’ rhythm and music reading. Students can also send recordings to teachers.

“I am able to focus on the skill and the pedagogy of how to play an instrument, and SmartMusic is able to support me as my students practice,” says Ms. Gail Rowland, orchestra director at Hawthorn Hill Elementary and Summit Lakes Middle School. “I am also able to provide them not only solo literature but also orchestra literature so they can be a soloist in SmartMusic or they can play along with an orchestra sound in SmartMusic, so it’s creating a virtual environment until we are able to get back together.”

The program reflects the district’s appreciation for the arts.

“LSR7 values music education,” Ms. Rowland says. “They value feedback and the need for kids to get instant feedback. They realize teachers teach the tools and the tools support our students, but we are ultimately there to be the guides. SmartMusic is a tremendous investment in our students.”

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Lark Lindgren from Hazel Grove Elementary sits on her desk during reading time. Classrooms aren’t using soft cushions as part of COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, but third-grade teacher Mrs. Ashley Ray found an opportunity for students to still enjoy reading time. Students are allowed to sit on their desks as long as they are being safe.

Weston King, a current seventh-grade student at Summit Lakes Middle School, practices opening his locker this past October on Transition Day, which gives all 7th and 9th-grade students the opportunity to preview their new schools.

Ximena Hernandez Maya and Madeline Asher from Sunset Valley Elementary draw with chalk in a small, fenced yard outside their classroom. The underused space gives students opportunities to take outdoor breaks while access to the playground is limited.

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My name is Ethan Kelly and I have been helping local businesses gain customers through digital marketing for quite some time. At NPG Digital we do not sell services to local businesses, we cultivate winning strategies to reach business goals. From launching a website, to managing video campaigns we have services for everything you can imagine! More importantly, we drive proven results with analytics to help ensure a return on investment.

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