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CPS Students Joined Millions Worldwide in Hour of Code

January 13, 2016

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CPS Students Joined Millions Worldwide in Hour of Code

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Cincinnati Public Schools' students joined a massive learning event when they participated recently in the Hour of Code regional kickoff.

The event, held in December at Taft Information Technology High

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School in the West End, gave students opportunities to both teach and learn more about the field of information technology (IT).

An one-hour introduction to computer science, the Hour of Code was designed to expose students to the basics behind computer coding. Cincinnati's event joined the Taft and nearby Hays-Porter School communities for an evening where elementary and high school students proudly showed off what they are learning in computer science classes and after-school Tech Club to their teachers, peers, parents and other adults.

"There is a shortage of ethnic minorities in the IT field," said Michael Turner, principal of Taft IT High School. "Our goal with this event was to increase IT presence in the West End."

The nonprofit Code.org and over 100 others launched this global movement in 2013 to do just that — expand students' knowledge of the world of IT. The Cincinnati event allowed students to join over 100 million others worldwide who have tried an Hour of Code.

The tech night at Taft brought together organizations, companies, teachers, and children from local schools and their parents to make them aware of IT opportunities in the global world, and to promote IT education in the city. Speakers opened the evening with a presentation of a cash gift by a Taft alumnus and a speech by Dalric Webb of Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA).

Then students got to step into teachers' shoes for the evening. They took seats at laptops set up around the room and demonstrated their coding skills, teaching the learners such fundamentals as how to start building websites and what is involved in making video games.

Alexis Cravens, a junior at Taft in her first year of the high school's Tech Club, was one of those teachers. "We rely so much on technology," she said. "It touches so much. There's not a day I go home where I don't learn something new in technology."

Stephen Smith of Cincinnati Bell said he sees firsthand the importance of IT jobs to his company.

"We have such a need for employees trained in this field," Smith said. "There is a plethora of things they can be involved in related to technology. Unfortunately, thousands of jobs each year go unfilled in IT."

Cincinnati Bell and the University of Cincinnati's School of Information Technology co-sponsored this event. It was also supported by the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) and the XOOPS (web application platform) Foundation.

Hour of Code has a direct tie-in to CPS' My Tomorrow initiative, which focuses on preparing students for the career pathways of their choice by combining high expectations, technology and mentoring.

While the students ultimately benefitted from the Hour of Code, the community also will gain from it, as emphasized by Michael Beck, Chair of the Education Committee for the West End Community Council.

"We believe that a basic understanding of software engineering provides a set of fundamental skills that is vital, both to the child's future and the future of Cincinnati's economy," Beck said. "By exposing kids early to coding, we can begin to build a pipeline of diverse IT students to strengthen Cincinnati's economy and prepare our region for the jobs of tomorrow."

Learn more about:
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