

Seeing new worlds

Michael Moore / Sentinel Staff

Gilsum STEAM Academy 5th-grader McKenzie Franklin peers into an electron microscope during a visit to River Valley Community College, where she and fellow students learned about biology and advanced manufacturing. Malcom Handy, also a 5th-grader, waits in the wings for a turn at the scope.

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Gilsum STEAM students learn science at River Valley By Matt Nanci Sentinel Staff

The average age of a student at **River Valley Community College** 's academic center in Keene dropped significantly for a day this month.

That's because all 47 kindergarten through 6th-grade students from **Gilsum STEAM Academy** went to River Valley to learn about science and manufacturing.

The students rotated through several stations set up in different classrooms.

For example, students learned about what an assembly line is and how it works. Then, they put their knowledge to use to make the snack every student would eat later that afternoon. They also made catapults and rockets using straws.

In another classroom, students learned about chemical reactions. They made slime by mixing glue, water, starch, glitter and food coloring.

Students also turned pennies silver and brass by coating them with zinc and placing them onto a hot plate. Their eyes lit up as the pennies changed color in a matter of

seconds as if by magic.

In a biology lab, students learned about microscopes and slides. Under the microscope, they looked at pond water, leaves, rocks, fungi and more.

Even the adult chaperones and teachers were amazed at what they saw.

"The kids get really excited when the adults are excited," said **Colleen Ross**, a River Valley student who was leading the lesson on microscopes.

The trip to the college marks the beginning of a relationship between the two schools.

"I just believe that learning outside the walls of the school is very valuable because it's something these kids are going to be doing all their lives," Gilsum Principal **Adrienne Noel** said.

The Gilsum school, a hands-on, project-based learning program, focuses on the fields of science, technology, engineering, the arts and math (STEAM).

Later this spring, professors will visit Gilsum STEAM Academy and teach more science and technology lessons, according to Noel.

"There's a huge skills gap right now in those positions and those fields," said **Scott Lazzaro**, the program director for advanced manufacturing at River Valley.

Lazzaro said the new relationship with the school is a good opportunity for community outreach and to give children ideas for their future. It also helps spread awareness of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, also known as STEM.

There is a big demand for jobs in STEM, but there's also a large skills gap in the workforce, which prevents those jobs from being filled, according to Lazzaro.

"The realization is that we need to reach these children at a younger age and make them aware that these fields are out there," he said.

Noel said the visit to River Valley couldn't have gone any better and she looks forward for more coordinated activities with the college.

"I think they planned it well, they executed it perfectly and the kids really had a blast," she said. "It was wonderful. We all walked away saying, 'This is just fantastic — one of the greatest trips we've been on.'"

An environmental science major at **Franklin Pierce University** was chosen as a Society of Wetland Scientists Mentoring Award winner.

Doria Brown, of Little Falls, N.J., was one of 12 students chosen for the award from across the country.

At the end of May, she will attend the society's annual conference in Corpus Christi, Texas. While there, she will be matched with a mentor and learn about graduate school opportunities and career options.

"Doria epitomizes all that is good about Franklin Pierce students. She is passionate, hard-working and talented," **Catherine Owen Koning**, an environmental science professor at the university, said in a news release from the institution. "Everyone at Franklin Pierce is very proud of Doria and we are excited that the Society of Wetland Scientists recognized these qualities in her application."

Brown's goal is to become an environmental science professor. Brown will also present research from her senior thesis at the conference.

"I would like to thank (Koning) for informing me about this opportunity, as well as Dr. **(Paul) Kotila** and Dr. **(Rhine) Singleton** for helping me expand my research in Forest Ecology and Senior Seminar," Brown said in the release. "I am blessed to have such dedicated professors here at Franklin Pierce and am very excited for this opportunity to present at the conference."

Matt Nanci can be reached at 352-1234, extension 1439, or mnanci@keenesentinel.com. Follow him on Twitter @MNanciKS.