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News - Screven-Jenkins Regional Library

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People, Libraries and Agencies IN THE NEWS

Screven-Jenkins Regional Library System

The 2018 Hour of Code was the first coding-oriented program ever held at the Screven-Jenkins Regional Library System, and it was a great success!

The Screven-Jenkins Regional Library System, which consists of two libraries in Screven and Jenkins Counties in Southeast Georgia, was a recipient of a mini-grant of $500 provided by Google for Education and the American Library Association (ALA). Screven and Jenkins counties are both very rural and poor, with few resources available for students or adults interested in coding and technology. Receiving this grant made an exciting and enjoyable event possible as the staff at the library system kicked off their first foray into coding!

The Hour of Code programs for the library system consisted of two events, one at the Jenkins County Memorial Library in Millen, Georgia on Wednesday, December 5, 2018 and the other at the Screven County Library in Sylvania, Georgia on Friday, December 7, 2018.

While none of the staff had experience in teaching coding, using Google's First Hour of Code modules made it possible to set up laptops in the libraries' multipurpose rooms, allowing anyone who was interested in participating to join in and try their hands at coding in a simple, non-threatening manner.

To ensure that there would be something to do if there were more participants than there were laptops to accommodate them, the library system also invested some of the money from the grant into six Sphero Mini robots, which were used to run mazes during the program. This wound up being a wise investment as, not only were there more participants than laptops, but the Minis were highly popular with everyone, including the parents who had brought their children to the events! It became a truly all-ages event that was enjoyed by the entire family.

Since this was the first coding-related event at either library, a great deal of work was put into making sure the public knew about the event, and it was made open to all ages to increase the likelihood of participants. The library system reached out to the schools and were able to get information about the coding events included in the schools' afternoon announcements. In addition, the event was heavily featured in the libraries' weekly newspaper articles and on their website and Facebook pages.
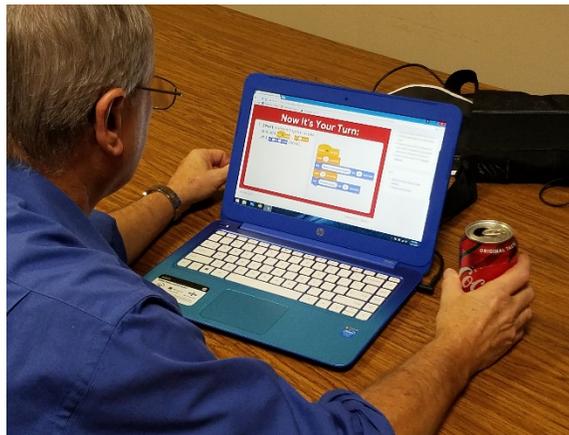
Another way that the library system was able to bring in participants was by offering refreshments, as well as door prizes related to technology, such as cable bites (cute cable protectors shaped like animals) and earbuds with cases. In addition, there was a drawing in which one lucky child per library won their very own Sphero Mini!

The remaining Sphero Mini robots were retained by the library system to be used in future STEAM programs. Plans for use of the Sphero Minis include manufacturing obstacle courses for the Minis to maneuver through, teaching how to code the Minis to perform tasks and follow routes, and more. The staff keep coming up with new ideas for ways to use them to attract participants and get them excited about science and technology!

Participants at the events expressed a great deal of interest in participating in future coding and robotics events. The library system plans on continuing to host coding events in the future, in addition to integrating coding into the monthly STEAM programs being held at each library.

The Screven-Jenkins Regional Library System would like to thank the ALA and Google for providing the opportunity to have this wonderful event.