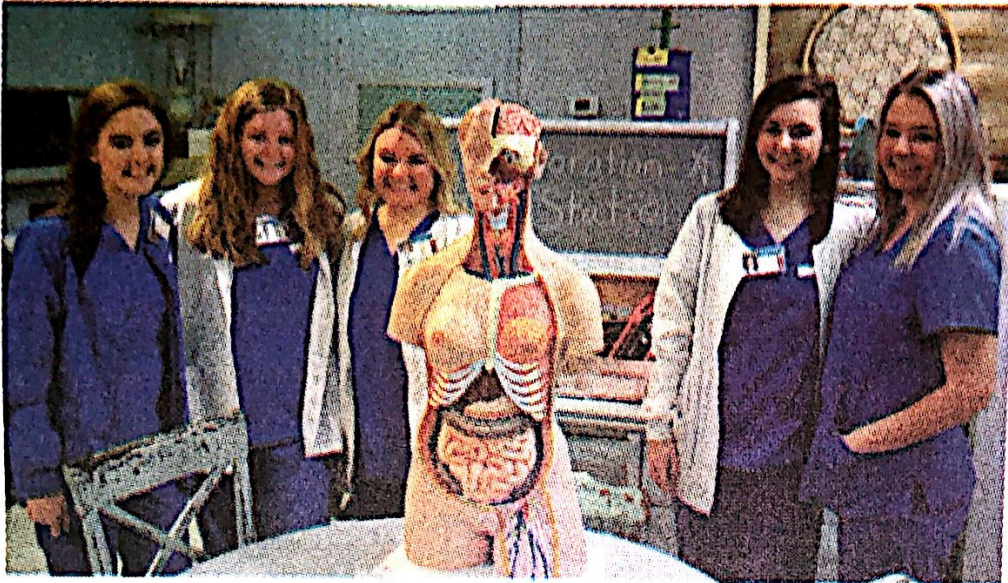


Health Science Day held at Huntington Place Elementary

Fourth grade students learn about medicine, preventive measures and tools



By Aaron Bonner
Gazette Staff

Fourth graders at Huntington Place Elementary School met with Tuscaloosa County High School students for a day of health science education on March 6.

Students in Merideth Lett and Hollie Nelson's fourth grade classrooms signed in outside of their classroom and were given a faux hospital bracelet as they stepped inside for Health Science Day. Through the use of six distinct stations full of activities, TCHS health science instructor Marla Workman, along with several student interns, worked to educate children on protective equipment, medical tools and the human body.

"I teach Mrs. Lett's daughter and she teaches my youngest daughter, and so we formed a partnership between our classes just so that the kids could interact with each other," Workman said.

This partnership began at the start of the 2019-2020 school year, with Lett and Nelson's students opening up a pen pal initiative with Workman's students. As the high schoolers sent messages back and forth with Huntington Place students and visited the school for guest talks, the three teachers started to plan a day full of educational activities between the classrooms.

Health Science Day was created as a way for Lett and Nelson's students to gain first-hand experience with medical tools and protective equipment while learning how to take care of their own bodies. Anna Hocutt, a TCHS junior, said that having an opportunity to share her interests and career goals with her pen pal and other children was exciting as she helped students at Station 1 put on personal protective equipment for a lesson.

"We're just getting to share with them the day-to-day kind of supplies that a doctor or

Photos by Aaron Bonner

TCHS health science interns stand ready at Station 2 to teach children about the human body.



At Station 1, students were taught about personal protective equipment.

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Students learned how to use a stethoscope to hear each other's heartbeats and lungs.

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a nurse would use when dealing with patients and all that kind of stuff, like gloves, hair covers, shoe covers and gowns," Hocutt said. "We're really teaching them about safety and not spreading bacteria or germs, you know? They're always learning how to wash their hands at school, but now they're actually learning about all the processes that go into keeping each other safe and keeping patients safe from bacteria and germs."

Each station came equipped with a new tool or activity for students to interact with. At Station 2, students learned about body organs by taking apart a torso model and learning the function of organs such as the liver and kidneys.

At Station 4, students grabbed a stethoscope and listened to their classmate's heartbeat and lungs. Using a blood pressure cuff, TCHS students worked to take a fourth grader's blood pressure and educate children on how tools in their doctor's office can help diagnose issues.

"I don't think it's ever too early to introduce kids to the field of medicine," Workman said. "We need good medical workers and my job at the high school is to help these kids figure out if the medical field is right for them."

Earlier this year, Lett and Nelson's students were given a chance to meet with their pen pals and share their own interests and classroom with Tuscaloosa County High School students. Through the use of mindfulness infused education, Huntington Place students shared a system known as the hexaflex to help discuss psychological flexibility and conflict resolution.

With Workman's students sharing their values and what they've learned through internship opportunities, students in Lett and Nelson's classrooms learned how to keep calm in a stressful situation and more about career technical education courses that would soon be available to them. Health Science Day served as an follow-up to these earlier meetings and letters, with students gaining a new perspective on the things they see in their own doctors' offices or on TV.

"We will follow up and finish up with [the hexaflex] today," Lett said. "The students will look at and process what they've observed and what they've learned from these HOSA students today and look for the characteristics such as staying in the present moment, those kinds of things."

As students in Lett and Nelson's classrooms asked questions, Workman's students were there to give them answers. After students finished their activities at each station, snacks were passed around to celebrate a new lesson learned.