



Teachers get 'Bite of Science' to help students

Training focuses on inspiring students to learn more about STEM fields during school

By RAYTEVIA EVANS ray@theitem.com
Posted 10/25/14

Just as organizations and programs are looking to partner with schools to provide more STEM, or science, technology, engineering and math, opportunities for teachers, those same advocates are coming up with creative ways to reach teachers who can also help encourage students to take an interest in science.

The Center for Excellence in Education is doing its part by sponsoring a teacher training program. The organization, along with Sumter School District, hosted the "Bite of Science" professional enrichment session for high school teachers in Sumter, Lee and Clarendon counties at Crestwood High School on Thursday evening.

"This is an effort to have more students interested in STEM. We want to meet teachers' needs so they can inspire those students," Natasha Schuh-Nuhfer, director of teacher enrichment programs for the center. "We have speakers talk about different career paths other than the usual four-year college path, and those speakers are usually from a local industry that employs people with STEM experience and someone who works in education."

For Thursday's event, speakers Tracy Harrington, product industrialization manager for Continental Tire the Americas, and John J. Lavigne, associate professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at University of South Carolina, talked to about 30 teachers about ways to make science and engineering interesting for students in the classroom.

Lavigne showed the educators different experiments and ideas for teachers to try with their students in an effort to promote science education.

"This is cool chemistry because even I can do it," Lavigne said jokingly. "There are opportunities to get younger students, high school students, in labs on campus and experiencing what that life is like. There are a lot of really good students out there. Some of them are not particularly A students, but they have a curiosity, and I love having them in the lab."

Schuh-Nuhfer said they do the enrichment sessions for teachers to make the connections between the high school level and college and career level.

Without bringing in those speakers, she said some teachers may not be able to make those connections, but after meeting and chatting with some of the speakers, they may notice something their students are interested in and will have those local experts as a resource to help guide students in the right direction.

According to the center, the mission of the Teacher Enrichment Program is to assure a future talented and diverse U.S. workforce in STEM positions. The program provides rural and urban underserved high school teachers the opportunity to connect with experts from local industries and academia to really look at cutting-edge research and how to assist students and encourage their curiosity about STEM careers.

This year, the education center has hosted similar sessions in South Carolina, Maryland and Virginia and plans to host more events in the spring in California, Florida and Texas.