

Robotics revelations render rich rewards for student researchers

• Robotics program integrates science, technology, engineering and math

Special to Tribune

A week-long robotics program for local youth was held last week at the Center For Alaskan Coastal Studies. More than 20 children ages between the ages of 8 to 14 signed up to participate in the program, which included activities such as learning about principles of design, how to use digital and analog sensors, as well as the basics of programming.

Hannah and Rachael Tipperman, twin 16-year-old girls from the Philadelphia area, organized and ran the program. They began working with robotics as middle schoolers and co-founded Robot Springboard as a nonprofit organization to help other kids learn about robotics as well.

Although Homer may seem a long way from Philadelphia, co-founder Hannah Tipperman explained.

"A few years back, we had a chance meeting with a retired high school principal from Anchorage and we talked about our interest in robotics," she explained. "He encouraged us to travel to Alaska and try to share our enthusiasm with other kids. We never forgot that conversation."

Rachael agreed.

"We're excited to hold this robotics camp in Homer and really grateful to CACS for so generously providing us with a meeting space," she said. "In organizing the camp, we've been really fortunate to be involved with the National Center For Women and Information Technology."

The center is a supportive organization for women of all ages who are interested in technology.

"Some terrific people at the Drexel University Department of Computer Sciences also helped us develop a robotics program for middle school girls," Rachael said. "We will be running the program in Philadelphia in August."

CACS Director Beth Trowbridge said she was thrilled to be approached about the robotics camp.

"We are so excited to host this amazing robotics camp," she said. "Rachel and Hannah are excellent role models for youth in Homer and exemplify youth taking action — something that CACS has been proud to support."

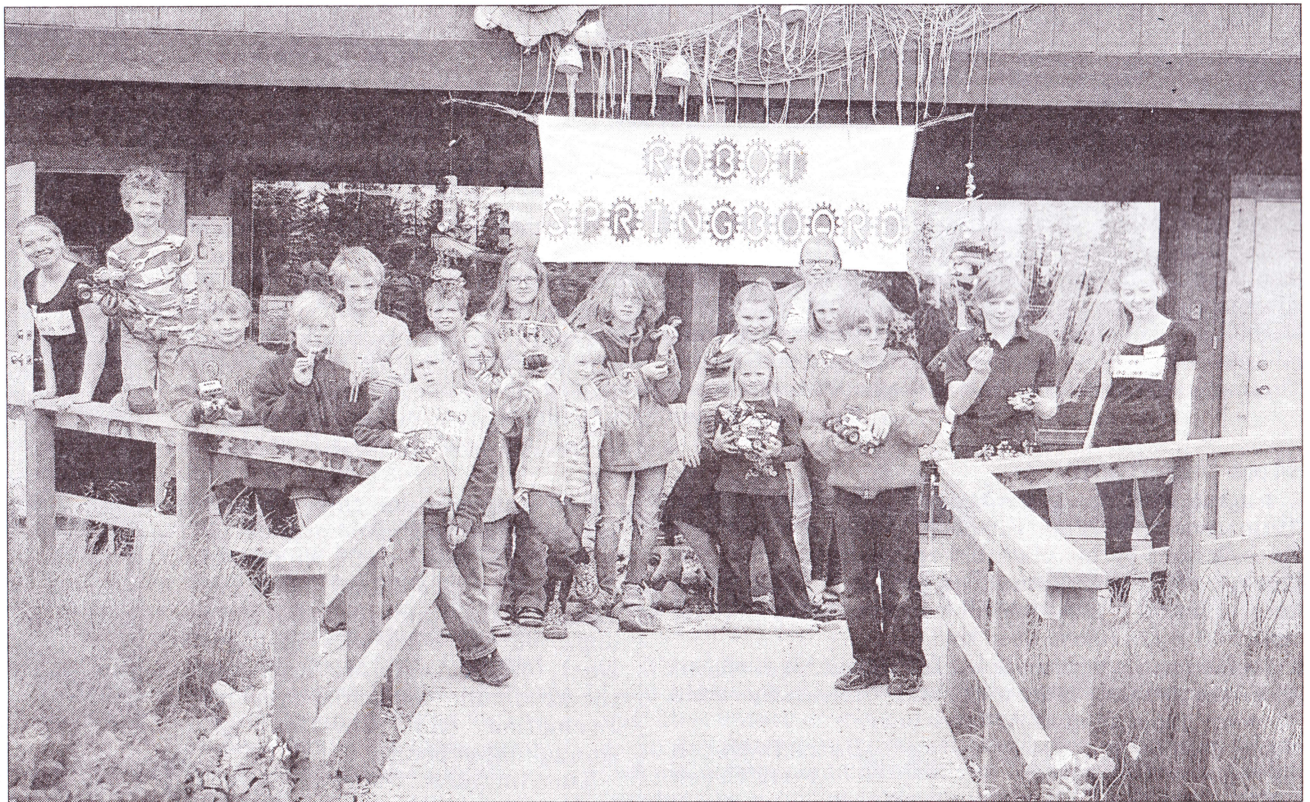
Trowbridge said the twins' robotics program integrates science, technology, engineering and math with learning and fun.

"We are learning a lot from them and hope to capture some of their enthusiasm and knowledge to help expand the STEM components of our educational programs," Trowbridge added.

Hannah and Rachael both said they found it gratifying to see how much the kids seemed to enjoy the camp.

"We were impressed with how much they accomplished and learned," the Tippermans said.

Homer youth Rio Pitcher said he enjoyed the camp and thanked the sisters for coming.



Photos provided

Robotic participants (not photographed in order) Calvin Anderson, Katie Clark, Austin Cline, Larry Dunn, Caleb Johnson, Noah Cannon, Teddy Handley, Isabella Jansen, Savannah Jansen, Theo McDonough, Seamus McDonough, Cora Parish, Jamie Parish, Aiden Pullman, Jackson Sarber, Rio Shemet Pitcher and Robby Venendaal are flanked by Rachael (LEFT) and Hannah (RIGHT). The twins organized and ran the program for youth ages 8 to 14.

"Thank you for teaching me how to make Lego robots," he said. "They are cool to play with and can do neat things on their missions. I like working in teams with the other kids and hope to do more of this in school next year."

In addition to the children who attended the camp, several local teachers, Girl Scout and 4H organizers also were there to learn about the program and working with the robot kits.

An organizational and informational meeting was held on June 25 at the R.E.C. Room in Homer to explore the potential for continuing a year round robotics club.

The Center For Alaskan Coastal Studies is a nonprofit organization located in Homer that delivers educational programs and guided tours to more than 12,000 students and visitors every year.



The grassroots organization started in 1982 and has the support of more than 350 members, 100 volunteers and several businesses in the Homer community. Find more information at www.akcoastalstudies.org

Robot Springboard is a nonprofit organization founded to promote education and awareness of robotics programs for children. They provide community outreach through library presentations and week-long community robotics programs. More information can be found at www.robotspringboard.org.

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August 1 - Probiotic Foods: Why They Are Essential for Excellent Health

with Jenifer Dickson, Certified Nutritional Therapist

August 8 - Food and Mental Balance/Imbalance
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Classes are also available via live simulcast in Seldovia at the Seldovia Conference Center.

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