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Army Scientists and Engineers Volunteer at APG STEM Day

By Aerial Storey



DEVCOM CBC employees, lead engineering technician Gregory Walton and industrial engineer Stella Lee, volunteer at APG STEM Day to teach young scouts and the local community about coding and programming in the STEM field by helping participants guide the Sphero BOLT Coding Robots through various obstacle courses at Aberdeen Proving Ground on September 30, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Aerial Storey)

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD – Scientists and engineers from the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC) spent time with hundreds of local families participating in the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Day. The event is a combination of the long-running “STEM-in-Scouting” merit-badge event that’s been held at APG for years, along with a separate STEM expo that was open to the public.

DEVCOM CBC supported the event with over ten volunteers from the Center providing their expertise as they guided participants through a hands-on programming and coding exercise featuring several Sphero BOLT Coding Robots. The activity taught participants how to remotely navigate the robot which used sensors paired with innovative technology, where they then were able to take part in various obstacle courses set up at the location.

The activity was provided on behalf of CBC by a grant from the Army Educational Outreach Program (AEOP). The AEOP awarded the grant to Center biologist, Alena Calm, for her STEM activity proposal earlier this year. Calm is heavily involved in STEM outreach efforts and volunteered to assist at APG STEM Day in addition to providing the Sphero BOLT robots. “I thought this would be a good way to engage the kids and get everybody out to see what’s behind the gates at APG,” said Calm.



Two scouts work together to navigate the Sphero BOLT Coding Robot through the first obstacle course set up at the DEVCOM CBC activity booth during APG STEM Day held on September 30, 2023 at Aberdeen Proving Ground. (U.S. Army photo by Aerial Storey)

The Sphero BOLT robots proved to be a successful activity, with visitors flocking to the booth to test out their programming and coding abilities on a real robot. Children and families spared extra time at the booth, perfecting their newly developed skills thanks to the guidance of DEVCOM CBC's team of expert scientists, engineers, and researchers.

Stella Lee, an industrial engineer at DEVCOM CBC, volunteered during the event and shared the

excitement of the parents and children who came to visit. "I used to be one of those parents who would bring my kids to events like these and encourage my kids to engage in the activities," she said. "So, I am truly appreciative of DEVCOM CBC providing STEM opportunities to scientists and to the community. Seeing all the parents get as excited as the kids about this activity – it's an honor to be a part of this."

Sarah Katoski, a biologist with DEVCOM CBC, also volunteered at the event and decided to bring along her own teen to help support the engagement effort and expose him to the activities on the campus. "It's important to expose kids at a young age. Events like these are a lot of fun and a great opportunity," she said. "It's nice getting out here and seeing what every organization is doing."

The Chemical Biological Application and Risk Reduction (CBARR) unit from DEVCOM CBC featured Army field equipment at the event. The equipment, known as the Compact Rapid Chemical Agent Neutralization System (CRaCANS), gave participants hands-on experience on the possibilities of STEM and how it can be applied in the real world.

In addition to DEVCOM CBC, other APG tenants, such as the U.S. Army DEVCOM Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center; the DEVCOM Army Research Laboratory; and the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command provided various activities and demonstrations including drone flight simulations, night vision immersion, virtual reality simulation, Army equipment, 3D printed models, and more.



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Keith Parsons of Owings, Maryland brought three of his own children out to the event and was elated with the outcome. "As a cub scout dad, I wanted the scouts to come to this event so they can be curious and learn. This is the best event for the kids we've ever done," he said. Parsons explained that the family looks forward to the event every year and plans to continue to be involved in the STEM events that APG provides.

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For more information about the DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center, visit <https://cbc.DEVCOM.army.mil>

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