

Local students attend STEM showcase

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PANAMA CITY — Bill Porter, a.k.a Bill Science, was entertaining kids inside FSU's Holley Center Tuesday night with a robot that spun, swirled and twirled about.

"This is an omni-directional robot," Porter said, while the kids played with the robot. "We are working on a scaled up version to run around ships and carry large loads."

The robot's performance was part of Florida State University Panama City's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Institute showcase. STEM is designed to encourage area K-12 students to pursue those academic disciplines.

Porter, an electrical engineer at the Naval Surface Warfare Center Panama City, clearly brought one of the stars of the show, but other science programs also were showcased.

Amelia Tarkington, 11, Renaissance School International in Panama City, had a display of a corn research program.

"I'm testing genetically modified corn acidity against other corn," Amelia said. "Some researchers think acidity can be a marker for cancer."

Amelia is hoping to be a doctor when she graduates school.

Ginger Littleton, director of FSU PC's STEM Institute, said she hopes events like the one at FSUPC will inspire kids be more involved in math and science.

"We're trying to hook kids on math and science," Littleton said.

Littleton said giving hands-on access to robots and rockets make science fun.

"They are fun when you do it," she said. "It's not fun when someone tells you about it."

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