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Young scientists participate in experiments at Milan Library

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MILAN - Junior scientists brushed up on science theories at the Milan Library before counting down to a live rocket launch Wednesday.

The children became assistants for "Mad Scientist" Michelle Mower, helping her with experiments that tested the laws of gravity, inertia and other scientific principles.

The junior scientists gathered around a bucket of dry ice that Mower used to recreate the smoky atmosphere of a planet and to teach the role carbon dioxide plays in science.

They found out that hot air rises in a demonstration where a hot air gun was used to send a large plastic bag flying. They also created an alien bubble bath in a beaker before later melting a Styrofoam alien with acetone.

The enrichment activities were followed by a toy rocket launch for the young astronauts.

"Stars are made up of gas, and when they burn out they turn into a black hole," Mower said during one demonstration. "Before they die, they shoot across the sky."

The students were participating in the Milan Library's summer reading program, which promotes fun ways for children to continue to read and learn.

Each week guest speakers come to talk about different subjects, and children get to choose from books related to each week's theme.

More than 500 children and teens from Milan can win rewards, such as coupons from local businesses, for reaching goals.

"It's just trying to get kids involved in the library and involved with reading," said children's librarian Betsy Higgins. "We like to see the kids all excited about science and learning. It really involves the whole town."

Vivian Janda, of Milan, attended the session with her 5-year-old grandson, Benjamin Leake.

"We come every week and go check out the books first and then go to the program, which he really enjoys," Janda said. "I'm a pre-school teacher, and with working with kids, I'm always trying to find a way to make something fun, so now I might go melt an alien."

Mower is one of the "scientists" that performs the activities for children throughout the area with Mad Science of the Mid-South in Bartlett. The company sends out science enthusiasts as ambassadors to help children learn about the subject.

Mower said that children can often grow up disliking science and that she can help them see a new

perspective.

"I think it's great to not be intimidated by science and see all the neat things it can do," she said.

Milan Library Director Dot Bruce said that the program keeps children and teenagers active while improving their reading skills.

"If you get them early, they'll continue to love to read and love the library," she said.

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