

# SUMMERLIN SCHOOLS

## Science lesson takes kids into space

By HEATHER RAWLYK

Armed with a fresh box of crayons, a clean sheet of paper and a newly sharpened No. 2 pencil, 8-year-old Gwyn Pollock eyed a flashcard featuring facts about the planet Saturn, took a deep breath and wrote, what she claimed, was the most important letter she had ever written.

"This isn't just any letter," said Pollock, a third-grade student at Ethel Winterheimer-Staton Elementary School. "It's a letter to the president of the United States. Can you believe that?"

Gwyn told the president how much fun she was having and how much she was learning through the Mad Science/NASA Space Explorers after-school program, taking place on Tuesday afternoons through March at the school. She drew a colorful picture of her favorite planet and wrote about how much she enjoyed putting on astronaut gloves and repairing a model space shuttle the previous week with her schoolmates.

Staton Elementary School is one of 80 of the Clark County School District's 180 elementary schools to host the Mad Science Enrichment Program — an after-school program that provides educational science enrichment to elementary and middle school students through lectures, games and hands-on experiments — but is only one of four schools in the county to test out the program as it's taught with a NASA twist.

Mad Science, a franchise business that began 20 years ago by two Toronto brothers, and NASA recently teamed up to integrate age appropriate NASA content with the original enrichment program so that children can learn about space and what it takes to be an astronaut, according to Senior Mad Scientist Jessica Miller, who is known by her students as "Lithium Lauren."

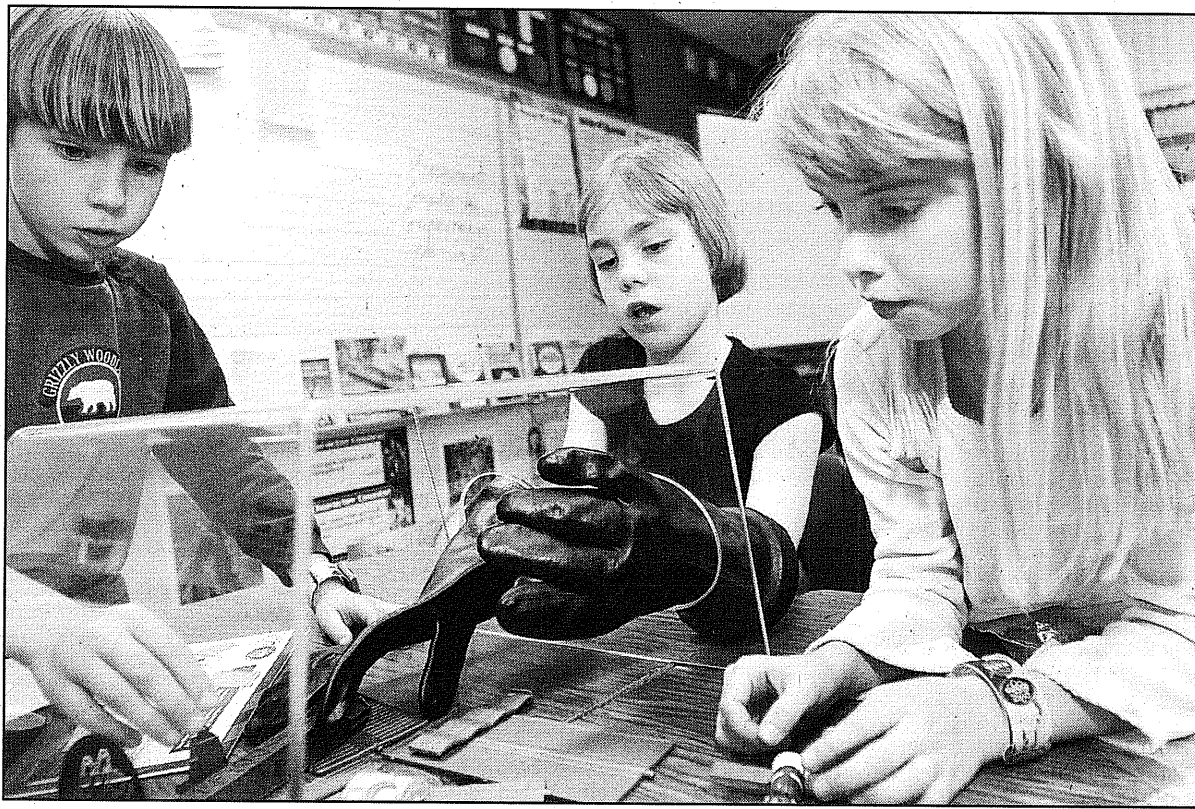
The business was recently asked to present the Mad Science/NASA Space Explorers Program to a panel in Washington, D.C., which is looking into the various outreach programs in space and science education throughout the country.

Scott Rosen, a Summerlin resident who owns the Las Vegas franchise of Mad Science with his wife, Robyn, requested the children participating draw pictures or write President George W. Bush to tell him what they were learning through the program. Parents of the students were also asked to write letters about what their children have learned through the eight-week program.

The letters and drawings will be presented to the panel and looked over by the president, Miller said.

Gwyn jumped up and down and clapped her hands after handing in her letter.

"I can't believe this," she said. "This is so cool."



Students of Ethel Winterheimer-Staton Elementary School — from left, Bridger Woods, 8, Kali Tomlinson, 8, and Carly Mullin, 7 — participate in the after school Mad Science program, learning what it feels like to perform intricate assembly tasks using heavy gloves.

Earlier that day, Gwyn had learned what elements make up the different planets in the solar system. Students chose a partner and each team was given a flashcard with the picture of planet and a list of its elements. They were also handed bags of colored marbles.

After a few minutes of studying the cards, the teams stood in front of the classroom. One student read the flashcard and named the elements. When nitrogen was mentioned, the second team member would hold up beige colored marbles — as beige represents the element. White marbles were held up to represent hydrogen, yellow for helium and orange for methane.

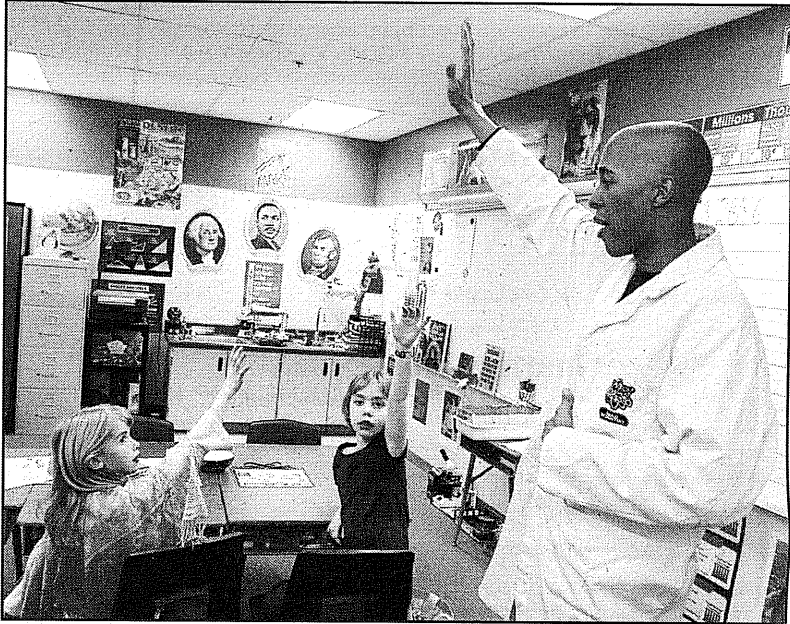
The week before, students learned that it isn't easy being an astronaut, Miller said.

"They had to put on gloves and put their hands in a Plexiglas box and try to fix things on a model of the Explorer Space Shuttle," she said. "They got pretty frustrated at the beginning and were saying, 'This is hard.'"

"It really taught them that there is a lot of work in being an astronaut. It isn't just walking on the moon."

In the remaining six weeks, the 103 Staton Elementary School students participating in the program will learn about space technology, planets, moons, the atmosphere and how to build a rocket.

After each one-hour class, students are given a take-home assignment. Students Feb. 14 were given a "star



Carly Mullin, 7, left, and Kali Tomlinson, 8, raise their hands to answer a question posed by Mad Science's Dr. Jiggawatt Jones, also known as Oliver Trigg.

show in a box" kit. Students are also given papers to put into their journals which list instructions on how to do experiments at home — such as making "goo."

Kyle Mullin, 11, said his favorite part of the Mad Science/NASA Space Explorers Program was learning what it feels like to work in space.

"It isn't as easy as it looks, but I had a lot of fun — it was really interesting," Kyle said.

Cory Jacobs, 11, agreed. "I liked making the space craft," he said. "I learned a lot."

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## Student leadership visits city council meeting

By HEATHER RAWLYK

Members of the Walter Jacobson Elementary School student government got the chance to see first-hand what it would be like to serve on the Las Vegas City Council during the morning session of the Feb. 15 meeting.

Mayor Oscar Goodman invited the 20 fourth- and fifth-grade student council members along with the elementary school's 41 chorus members to attend the meet-

The mayor heard the song when he had visited the students at the beginning of the school year and liked it so much that he wanted everybody to hear it, said Margaret Light, the school's music specialist.

Light's husband, Mac Light, said he wrote the song so that students would have something "kid-friendly" to sing that was appropriate for the city.

After the students sang "Forever Las Vegas" and the

10 visit to the school.

The mayor then invited student council members to sit next to the city council on the dais and help out during voting by pushing the "Yes" and "No" buttons.

The Feb. 15 meeting was ideal for elementary school students because it featured the approval of \$30,000 in youth grants for various schools throughout Clark County.

"They could see how city council makes decisions that affect them," Margaret Light

"They learned a lot through the trip to city hall — some things we didn't even expect."

Before the student's could enter city hall, they had to group together outside of chambers while the metal detector was set up and a Metro police dog sniffed the area.

After inspecting the area, the police officer brought the dog, Mona, over to the children and explained that she was trained to find explosives

students by hiding a scented object for Mona to find.

The children were awed to see the dog lay down next to the hidden device without seeing where the officer had placed it.

When they were done, the officer gave Mona a red ball to play with, as the dog was on a "strict diet."

"The kids had so much fun — they were learning, and they didn't even know it," Margaret Light said.