

GEAR UP

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs

“The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”

-- Robert M. Hutchins



Upcoming GEAR UP Events and Information

Macon County GEAR UP Summer Academy: For rising sixth, seventh and eighth graders; students will be involved in hands-on math and science activities as well as field trips. *July 12-15 and July 19-22.*
Contact Sherry Tilson for more details: stilson@southwesterncc.edu.

FUNtana Regional Summer Reading Program: For all current 6th graders in the GEAR UP cohort. The students will receive three books to keep so that over the summer students will have access to interesting books at his or her appropriate level of difficulty. GEAR UP is partnering with the Fontana Regional Library System, Qualla Boundary Public Library, and the Scholastic Literacy Partnership to make this program possible. For more information, contact Cindy Thompson at cindy_thompson@southwesterncc.edu.

Want to go to camp this summer? Not sure how to pay? Contact your local GEAR UP coordinator to find out how GEAR UP may be able to help you pay for your summer academic activities! For more information, contact: Susan Lanier (Cherokee): slanier@southwesterncc.edu, Robin Hall (Jackson): robinh@southwesterncc.edu, Sherry Tilson (Macon): stilson@southwesterncc.edu, or Ann Rickman (Swain): arickman@southwesterncc.edu.

In this issue:

- 2 GEAR UP Helps Sponsor Cherokee Earth Day Extravaganza
- 2 Scotts Creek Students Explore Dream Jobs
- 3 Macon Early College Student Aims High
- 3 GEAR UP Increases Academic Rigor through Forensics Class
- 4 SCC GEAR UP Attends Graduation Summit

Serving Cherokee, Jackson County, Macon County, and Swain County

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GEAR UP Helps Sponsor Cherokee Earth Day Extravaganza

Recently, students, teachers, parents and grandparents from Cherokee Central Schools all came together to celebrate Earth Day. GEAR UP, community organizations and teachers worked together to offer a family event for all ages. Presenters from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tribal Fish and Wildlife, Healthy Cherokee, Sensational Science Saturdays, CMS Cherokee Science Investigation and others participated. Michael Skinner and Blair Ogburn from the Balsam Mountain Preserve Nature Center gave a “Birds of Prey and Reptiles” presentation. Mack Lackey a student at Cherokee Middle, said, “My favorite part was Spirit, the bald eagle.”



GEAR UP, community members, and students celebrate Earth Day

The event also included a contest for students in Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. They were asked to create a piece of artwork using only recycled materials, which helped strengthen students’ understanding of the beauty of “being green.” According to GEAR UP Coordinator Susan Lanier, almost 100 people attended the event.

Scotts Creek Students Explore Dream Jobs

What did you want to be when you were in middle school: doctor, veterinarian, teacher, chef, police officer? Forty-one seventh graders from Scotts Creek School explored their dreams in this year’s job shadow program. Area businesses agreed to be host sites, offering students first-hand experience in their chosen professions. “Students spent time on the water, learning fish management practices, at Jackson County courthouse observing court sessions, and at the Cullowhee Café preparing meals,” said GEAR UP Coordinator for Jackson County Robin Hall.

To prepare for their day on the job, GEAR UP staff conducted career exploration activities with students. Students learned about professional dress and behavior, resumes, writing thank you letters, and post-secondary education options. “Often students are so well prepared for their experience that many businesses request to be a host site the following year and/or offer to host field trips,” said Jennie Ashlock, GEAR UP college readiness coach. “As is true each year, Scotts Creek job shadow program is a win-win situation for everyone involved,” she added.

GEAR UP extends a hearty “thank you” to the following host businesses that made this year’s job shadow program possible: WCU Office of Public Information (Photography/Public Relations), WCU Athletic Department, WCU Police Department, Cullowhee Café, WRGC, Westcare EMS, Andy Shaw Ford, Webster Child Development Center, Cherokee Fish and Wildlife, Coward, Hicks, and Siler, P.A., and Cope Creek Animal Hospital.

Macon Early College Student Aims High

Macon Early College student Savannah Dail has known “what she wanted to be” since she was in second grade. “I opened up my science book and saw a picture of space!” she exclaimed. “In fifth grade I heard about Space Camp,” she added. Now the rising senior has been to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama four times! Upon graduation, Savannah plans to attend the University of Alabama in Huntsville to study Aerospace Engineering.

Recently, Savannah attended the Leadership Conference in Washington, DC and is planning a trip to San Francisco for the National Student Leadership Conference on Engineering. She is able to attend thanks to sponsors, including SCC GEAR UP.



Macon Early College and GEAR UP student Savannah Dail

Next year, Savannah is loading up on challenging classes, like Chemistry and Calculus, and will also be Treasurer for the Key Club for the second year in a row. Her advice to younger students? “Pay attention in the classes you like the most, because those will probably help you set career goals!”

GEAR UP Increases Academic Rigor through Forensics Class



Swain Middle School Eighth grade students Lexie McDowell, Anna Oates, and Sydnee Taylor examine a fetal pig during their dissection project.

Once each semester at Swain Middle School, GEAR UP’s Angie Noland teams up with 8th grade science teacher Gianna Carson to offer Forensics Science, a rigorous, upper-level science elective. The students have the opportunity to get hands-on experience handling evidence and “solving crimes,” explained Noland, a college readiness coach.

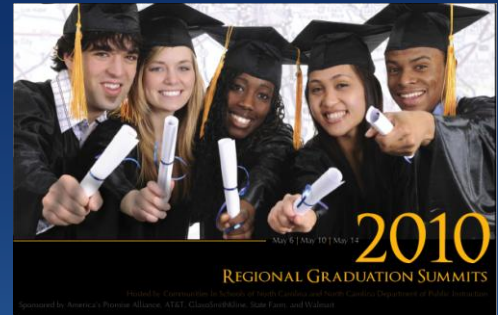
“The highlight of the class is fetal pig dissection,” she said. Students follow the same procedures as a forensic pathologist as they examine their pig’s anatomy. In addition to the dissection, students also learn about blood typing, DNA, finger-printing, entomology and ink chromatography. GEAR UP sponsors the class and helps supply the necessary materials for the lessons. According to Noland, “It is a wonderful opportunity for students to explore career possibilities in science-related fields.”

SCC GEAR UP Attends Graduation Summit

GEAR UP Coordinators and College Readiness Coaches attended the Communities In Schools of North Carolina Western Regional Graduation Summit at Harrah's Cherokee Hotel. Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Michell Hicks welcomed more than 100 educators, administrators and community members who attended the summit to discuss how to raise the North Carolina graduation rate. Chief Hicks stressed that creativity is important in tackling this challenge.

According to Debra Williams of the NC Dropout Prevention grant program, the graduation rate is 71.7%. Dr. Susan Weinberger of Mentor Consulting Group gave a presentation on the benefits of mentoring, and President and CEO of Communities in Schools of North Carolina Linda Harrill led a panel discussion and action planning to improve graduation rates. SCC GEAR UP had a booth with two picture slideshows and information available for attendees.

“GEAR UP works on this problem every day,” said Ann Rickman, Swain County GEAR UP coordinator. “This is an important dialogue to have in our communities. The graduation rate can only be improved by schools and communities teaming up to address the problem,” added Erin McCully, GEAR UP college readiness coach.



The Graduation Summit was sponsored by Communities In Schools of North Carolina (<http://www.cisnorg>)

Southwestern Community College GEAR UP

477 College Drive
Sylva, NC 28779

