

Bookawocky chemistry program engages inquisitive kids and parents

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Kids attended a “Chemists in the Library” program on Saturday, July 14 at the Oxboro Library in Bloomington. The program was sponsored by the Minnesota Section of the American Chemical Society and was part of Hennepin County Library’s “Bookawocky” summer programs for children and teens. The community room was packed with inquisitive kids, parents, and grandparents.

Pictured: Dave Blackburn (left), a chemistry professor at Century College, showed Maple Grove residents Sean, Ethan and Natalie Dietz how to make silly putty at a “Chemists in the Library” program at Hennepin County Library – Oxboro on July 14.

The “Chemists in the Library” program was coordinated by Phil Buhlmann, associate professor of chemistry at the Univ. of MN and chair of the Outreach Committee of the MN section of the American Chemical Society. Other chemists who participated were Dave Blackburn, chemistry professor at Century College; Wayne Haag, retired Century College chemistry professor; and Linda Nanko-Yeager, a retired chemist at pharmaceutical companies on the East Coast.

Volunteers assisting were Keiko Buhlmann, Phil’s wife; Kelsey Boyle, a U of M chemistry student; Helena Qi, a chemical physics major at Wellesley College in Boston who is in the Twin Cities this summer doing research work with a U of M professor; and Randy Siedschlag, a U of M chemistry graduate student.

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The chemists and assistants demonstrated chemical reactions, including:

- Color-changing chemical reaction using dry ice
- Make your own super ball
- “Balloon on a Stick”
- “Chemistry in a Bag” -- endothermic (cold) and exothermic (heat) reactions
- A “CSI” (crime scene investigation)-type experiment with changing color
- Make your own “hamster toothpaste”
- Make your own play putty

Pictured: Randy Siedschlag (right), a chemistry graduate student at the University of Minnesota, showed Bloomington residents (left to right) Carly Peterson, and Blue and Makae Brieschke how to make “hamster toothpaste” at a “Chemists in the Library” program at Hennepin County Library – Oxboro on July 14. Randy jokingly calls his experiment “hamster toothpaste” because it’s a soapy solution made in a tiny test tube. It is not intended to be used with real hamsters.