Pre-engineering Students Adapt Toys for Special Needs Children

Thirty-five students in two Pre-Engineering classes spent hours this week carefully disassembling and removing the internal workings of donated toys such as a talking Elmo from “Sesame Street,” motorized racecars, a singing Barbie and even a Transformer or two.

The students weren’t just analyzing the mechanics of the toys. They were learning how to reconfigure the circuits to allow the toys to be used by special needs children through the nonprofit, 13-year-old organization called RePlay for Kids. RePlay repairs devices and adapts a wide-range of battery operated toys for use by children with disabilities who might have limited resources. “The modification of the toys allows for assistive devices to be used on mainstream toys,” explained Ms. Natalie Wardega, assistant director of the Medina-based organization. She and science teacher Ms. Mary Ellen Scott were helping the students first find and then rewire the toys’ circuit boards.

The class Toy Adaptation Workshop project was made possible thanks to a $500 FirstEnergy STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education Grant awarded SJA.

The workshop was the start of the weeklong class process, which involved both rewiring the circuit boards with wire cutters and soldering irons, and then reassembling the toys. “I feel so good about helping young children play with toys, regardless of their special needs,” said junior Krupa Patel, who rewired a toy camera.

“I hope whoever receives this little truck I’m working on really enjoys it!” added sophomore Tammy Pham.
College Corner

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Academic Jaguars Win First Place in Case Western Reserve University Pop Quiz Bowl

The Academic Jaguars took first place last weekend in the Case Western Reserve University TRASH, the all-pop culture annual tournament, beating out nearly 60 teams from all over Northeast Ohio, as well as Akron and Warren! The win was all the more impressive because the SJA team had three members – Cari Milowicki ‘15, Kat Coughlin ’14 and Julie Simmons ’13 – compared to the four members of all the other teams. The tournament is an annual quiz bowl tournament offered by CWRU. It deals mostly with pop culture questions (books, movies, music, TV, video games, for example).
Cari had the second highest individual score for the tournament, which included teams from St. Edward High School, Firestone High School and Olmsted Falls High School.

SJA swept all portions of the tournament, including a bracket of seven matches, followed by quarter finals, semi-finals, and finals. In the last three matches, the Academic Jaguars only had two members (Cari and Kat) and still won!
"It felt incredible to experience such success, especially since we had fewer people than any of the other teams. I still can't believe we are able to win the whole thing!" shared Cari.

Students Are Santa's Helpers at St. Colman Christmas Boutique

Some 28 students assisted Mr. and Mrs. Claus this past weekend at the St. Colman Christmas Boutique! After Sunday Mass, the students read stories to the children, helped them create holiday crafts and even helped St. Colman parishioners sell bakery and Christmas items. The students also assisted Santa and Mrs. Claus with picture taking.
In addition to the students, Interim Principal Dr. James Cantwell and CORE Ministry theology teacher Mr. Dan Guion attended the event.
"It was so much fun working with the kids on crafts. I'm so glad we could help!" shared Misty Mencin '14.

"Christmas at the Academy" Is Tonight for Future Jaguars!

Girls in grades 5-8 are invited to Christmas at the Academy today, Friday, December 14, from 6:30-9 p.m. Admission is $1 or a non-perishable food item, which will be donated to a local food bank. Girls will enjoy Christmas-themed activities. Walk-ins are welcome!

Holiday Concert To Feature SJA's Musicians, Singers

Don't miss the always lyrical and fun SJA Christmas Concert, on Thursday, December 20, at 7 p.m. The Concert Choir, the String Ensemble, Jazz Band and Concert Band will perform. The evening concludes with the choir and band performing together. The concert is free.
Hundreds of Toys Collected for Catholic Charities' Toyland for Joyland Christmas Campaign

At the urging of the junior class, hundreds of toys were collected in the last two weeks for the Catholic Charities' Toyland for Joyland campaign! The toys, delivered on Thursday to Catholic Charities, will no doubt provide a very merry Christmas morning to the hundreds of families served in Northeast Ohio by the organization.

The collection was part of the Academy's Paws 4 a Cause - four weeks of giving in which each class sponsors a project. Right after Thanksgiving, seniors spearheaded a week of collecting items for Transitional Housing. The next week, juniors urged students to bring in toys to be donated to Catholic Charities. And lastly, sophomores and freshmen have been asking fellow students to donate peanut butter and socks, which will be given to the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph for distribution.

Congratulations to all the students for their hard work and generous donations!

L-R: Juniors Alesha Vovk, Nicole McManamon, Bethany Weisenseel and Sarah McMahon.

Key Club Blood Drive Was Standing-Room-Only Success

Nearly fifty students, faculty and staff members donated blood on Wednesday thanks to the Key Club's partnership in the endeavor with the American Red Cross. Seniors Ellen Saracina and Maggie Mertus were two of those donating.

"It was no problem," stated Ellen as she sat up and sipped a Coca-Cola.

"I was nervous, but it turned out to be pretty easy," agreed Maggie.

Freshmen Build Sense of Sisterhood

Tuesday was a day of discovery and affirmation of new friendships for the Class of 2016 as the students experienced the first-ever “Freshmen Pawz” day. Coordinated by Dean of Women Ms. Marie Ciolek, Guidance Counselor Ms. Maryann Marek and teachers Ms. Elizabeth Pillari (CORE Ministry), Mrs. Val Sanfilippo (Science) and Mr. Jared Polish (World Languages), the event included workshops, small group discussions, skits performed by a dozen senior leaders, and a video illustrating the enduring spirit of Saint Joseph Academy. Half the class participated in the morning workshops; the other half spent the afternoon together.

“This is really a growing and coming together experience,” shared Caroline Kilbane'16. “We can all be friends and have four years together as a family.”
Prayer & Presence Luncheon Brings Together Students, Sisters from the Congregation of St. Joseph

Sixteen Sisters from the Congregation of St. Joseph joined more than a dozen SJA students and adults at this year’s Christmas Prayer & Presence luncheon, held in the Nazareth Library. The Prayer & Presence program pairs each grade at the Academy with two CSJ Sisters who pray for them and share the spirit of charism throughout the year in various ways. The Sisters are also partnered with faculty and staff.

Attendees included Kathleen Carey CSJ '49, our Sister on Campus Marietta Starrie CSJ '49, Virginia Coldren CSJ '45, Pat Burke CSJ '48, Toni Campanella CSJ '44, Karen Lyons CSJ '59, Theresine Cregan CSJ '48, Jane Ockuly CSJ '57, Joan Lang CSJ, Madeleine Lmmermeier CSJ '44, Donna Hawk CSJ N '60, Juanita Shealey CSJ, Marion Hauck CSJ, Mary Ann Lavelle CSJ '46, Joyce Joecken N '61 and Phyllis DiFuccia SSJ, the school's Vice President of Mission.

"I love sitting down and having lunch with the Sisters," shared Ciara McGlynn '14. "It is always such a treat and an honor."

Swimming & Diving

On Thursday, December 6, Jaguar swimmers took on Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy and Walsh Jesuit at the University of Akron. Kiera Grady '15 and Katrin Blayney '15 took first and second place in the 200m Individual Medley. The Jaguars swam right past CVCA to take the victory.

On Saturday, December 8, the Jaguars competed in the First Annual Chardon Invitational. Sarah Sofish '14 lead the Jaguars to victory with a first-place finish in the 50-yard Freestyle. Sarah also place second in the 500-yard freestyle. The Jaguars finished in the top three of the 22 teams participating in the meet!

Basketball

The Jaguars upset Holy Name with a spirited 49-39 win on Wednesday, December 5. The Jaguars were led by point guard Daija Jones '13 who had 12 points, 4 assists and commanded the floor. Other key contributions came from Paige Heneghan '13 with 12 points and 7 rebounds; Nicole McManamon '14 with 10 points and some aggressive defense; Brittany Morrison '15 with 9 points and 7 rebounds; and Katie Battaglia '13 with 6 points and 10 rebounds.

JV won 28-26 | Freshmen won 53-28

Varsity defeated Gilmour Academy 55-52 on Saturday, December 8. Daija Jones '13 hit a three-point shot with 3.5 seconds remaining to seal the victory. Other key contributions came from Greta Burry '14 with 17 points; Ann Conroy '13 with 13 rebounds; Katie Battaglia '13 with 7 assists; and Sarah Schwind '13 with 6 steals and 6 rebounds. JV won 41-21