



LOGAN HOMESHOW

Admission & Parking

PRESENTING SPONSOR:



MEDIA SPONSOR:



FRIDAY JAN 25 10AM - 8PM & SATURDAY JAN 26 10AM - 6PM • CACHE COUNTY EVENT CENTER • LOGANHOMESHOW.COM

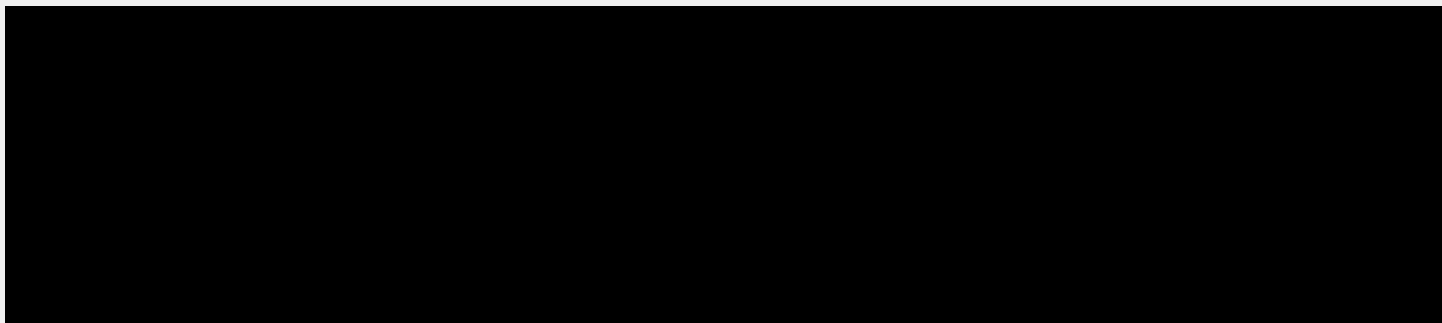
NEXT UP

Indians fare well at district meet

Event titles were extremely hard to come by for Preston's track & field team...

An app for that: Valley middle-schoolers build own apps at USU camp

By Kevin Opsahl staff writer Jun 29, 2017



Start your 'News' Year off right! Get the Herald Journal for as little as \$9.97/month



Start your 'News' Year off right! Get the Herald Journal for as little as \$9.97/month

Stay on top of all the local news with a subscription to the Herald Journal. Order your copy today for as little as \$9.97 a month. Subscribe today!

Now subscribe online with the Herald Journal. In our delivery area.

Subscribe Today!

App Camp mentor Athena Balderas, left talks to Mckell Balls in a computer lab at Utah State University on Tuesday.

Buy Now

Kevin Opsahl/Herald Journal

Earlier this week in a computer lab at Utah State University, middle-schooler Mckell Balls set out to create a smartphone app.

But Balls, who likes to play games like Minecraft and Lego Marvel Super Heroes, wants to use computer programming to design games when she grows up.

“Probably not a lot of kids think about that, because a lot of people just play video games,” she said. “I think it’s fun.”

Balls is participating in Utah State University’s App Camp, a weeklong opportunity for middle-schoolers to learn how to build their own smartphone applications with the help of high school mentors and a program called App Inventor.

App Camp is organized by Jody Clarke-Midura, assistant professor of instructional technology and learning sciences, and Vicki Allan, associate professor of computer science.

App Camp is now in its third year, according to Allan.

Allan wrote in an email that App Camp allows participants to “get exposure to programming, a skill that is all too often missing in the public school curriculum.”

“Cell phones are a great device for programming as apps combine colors, images, sounds and audio,” she wrote. “It becomes a great way to talk about this lucrative career option with others who play a critical role in helping youth to pick a future career.”

Clarke-Midura hopes students have fun with their completed apps.

“The great thing about apps is that they create an artifact that they can take home each day and show their family and friends,” she wrote in an email.

Getting youth interested in computer science now is critical, Allan said, because “kids start to decide about middle school age what they want to do when they grow up.”

App Camp is made possible through the National Center for Women and Information Technology, of NCWIT, a nonprofit chartered by the National Science Foundation, which seeks to increase participation of women in computer science.

“If there’s more gender balance, you get better programs developed; you get better products; the team works better,” Allan said.

For App Camp, USU applied for and received money for AspireIT, a program within ICWIT that has high school or college-age students mentor K-12 girls on computer programming.

This year’s App Camp brings 25 mentors and 120 middle schoolers, according to Allan.

Clarke-Midura said App Camp is a two-way street as far as what she hopes the middle school and high school students learn from each other.

“I hope the middle-schoolers see the high-schoolers as role models and a mentor,” she wrote. “I hope the high-schoolers learn more about programming and how to be a mentor.”

Although ICWIT’s focus may be on girls and young women, USU hosts two App Camps — one for girls and another for boys.

“There was a lot of demand from the boys who didn’t want to miss out,” Allan said.

Levi Blad, an eighth-grader at Spring Creek Middle School, is one of those boys. He first learned about App Camp when USU representatives came to his school to tell students.

“I just like to learn new things about technology,” Blad said. “I like to mess around with stuff

like that.”

Blad believes the benefit of participating in App Camp will be “just the satisfaction of knowing I’ve accomplished something new that I haven’t tried before.”

According to Janet Blad, Levi’s mother, it sounds like her son and his friends already have a natural interest in computer science.

“I swear, they registered back in March,” she said. “He’s been very excited about doing it.”

{div}{span style="font-family: tahoma,arial,Helvetica,sans-serif;"}{span style="font-size: 12px;"}
{/span}{/span}{/div}

kopsahl@hjnews.com

{/span}{/span}{/div}{div}{span style="font-family: tahoma,arial,Helvetica,sans-serif;"}{span style="font-size: 12px;"}
{/span}{/span}{/div}

Twitter: KevJourno

{/span}{/span}{/div}

Tags

App

School

Education

Software

University

High Schooler

Student

Allan

Camp

Jody Clarke-midura

Computer Programming



Kevin Opsahl

Kevin Opsahl is the USU reporter for The Herald Journal. He can be reached at kopsahl@hjnews.com or 435-792-7231.

Follow Kevin Opsahl