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feature

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CWRU to host TECHie Camp for Cleveland students to test programming, design skills

Case Western Reserve University is teaming with TECH CORPS and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to offer free TECHie Camps this summer, providing elementary and middle school students an opportunity to learn how to program computers, design their own video games and more.

With financial support from the Gelfand Engineering and Technology Education Fund, three free, one-week camps will be available to up to 60 students from the district's K-8 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) schools and from its system-wide gifted program. The camps will take place on the Case Western Reserve campus.

TECH CORPS is a Massachusetts-based, non-profit organization dedicated to bringing technology resources to K-12 students and teachers. It provides local, state and national program, and also partners with educational, business, government and community groups across the country. Since 1995, more than 10,000 TECH CORPS volunteers have devoted time and talents in schools and other settings.

Case Western Reserve's TECHie Camp program is designed to engage 3rd-8th grade students in activities

that stimulate a deeper interest in technology. Organizers also hope the program will give young people opportunities to use their imaginations. Middle school TECHie campers will learn how to create computer games using *Alice*, a three-dimensional software program from Carnegie Mellon researchers. Elementary school campers, meanwhile, will develop interactive animations and games using *Scratch*, a programming language for young students from scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Participating students also will tour the Case Western Reserve campus, including its engineering labs. In addition, the young people will interact with the university's undergraduates, faculty and staff.

"We want to develop ongoing relationships with the students," said Me'lani Joseph, the Gelfand Center's director of engineering. "Our goal is to encourage STEM students to consider furthering their study of science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) in college."

The Gelfand Center opened this month with a mission to foster university-wide collaboration in creating STEM learning opportunities for pre-college youth. It provides Northeast Ohio educators a central location to learn about the university's STEM education initiatives.

Nationally and locally, women, Latinos and African Americans are underrepresented in these fields, said Lisa M. Chambers, TECH CORPS national director. The organization works to close that gap through a combination of after-school and summer programs, including Student TECH CORPS, TECHie Club, TECHie Club: Girls, and more.

"Most elementary and middle school students today are enthusiastic users and consumers of technology," said Chambers. "They hardly remember a time when there was no Internet, e-mail or cell phones."

Through TECH CORPS programs, she said, "we put students in the role of creating and designing with technology—not just using and consuming it."

CMSD students interested in participating in the camps should submit an application packet by Feb. 22. Applications are available through the Cleveland school district principals and STEM schools teachers and online at goo.gl/hEpTh. The three free camps, which are limited to 20 students each, run the weeks of July 8, 15 and 22. The camps will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each weekday.

TECH CORPS also will offer an open-enrollment camp at the university the week of June 24. The cost to enroll is $350 per student. Details can be found on the organization's website, www.techcorps.org.

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