

Descriptions of Student Workshops and Parent Sessions (including information about presenters)

Student Workshops (choose 3)

Biology

Mysteries of Glowing Creatures

Kris Curran, UW-Whitewater

Fireflies, mushrooms, jellyfish, and deep-sea creatures glow! Because of what scientists have discovered about these creatures, we can now use light to screen for disease, develop therapies, and answer other important biological questions. Manipulating light is also fun! You will learn how fluorescence and bioluminescence work through playing with fluorescent objects, observing fluorescent gene expression in tadpoles, and bioluminescent gene expression in bacteria. Students will create glow-in-the-dark bracelets to take home.



Dr. Kris Curran is a Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, where she teaches Introductory Biology, Cell Biology, and Developmental Biology. The National Science Foundation is currently funding her research. She uses frog embryos to ask how genes that regulate sleep-wake in adults (circadian) instruct embryonic cells to make muscle. She is also a musician and finds that music makes a nice counterpoint to thinking about science. She is also an avid runner, swimmer, and bicyclist.

Chemistry

Bath Bomb Chemistry

Maclaryn Leonard, SHINE Technologies

Here's your chance to apply engineering principles and acid-base chemistry to create the perfect recipe for super impressive bath bombs. Create bombs with varying proportions of acids, bases, and salts. Then conduct scientific experiments to discover how quickly the reactants create carbon dioxide (CO₂) in each sample. In the process, you'll discover the optimal mixture to create an ideal, long-lasting, fizzy bomb. You'll be able to use your recipe to make more bath bombs at home.



Maclaryn grew up in South Beloit, Illinois, and attended Beloit College, where she graduated in May 2025 with a bachelor's degree double-majoring in Data Analytics and Public Health. She is grateful that her education has allowed her to gain experience across multiple STEM disciplines. Through her involvement in science via public health, technology through data analytics, and engineering in her current role as an Engineering Administrative Assistant, she has contributed to a variety of impactful projects, including assisting with the design for a new medical radioisotope building on the SHINE campus.

Civil Engineering

Engineering Roads with Cookie Dough

Emily Harrison, Project Manager, JT Engineering, Inc.

Travis Johnson, Engineer, JT Engineering, Inc.

Explore the world of roadway engineering through cookies! In this workshop, students will build edible models of flexible and rigid pavement structures using different types of cookies and toppings. They'll learn how materials like asphalt and concrete behave under pressure, compare pavement types, and discover what makes roadways strong and durable. It's a sweet way to dive into civil engineering.



Emily Harrison earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from UW-Platteville. Emily works as a Project Manager at JT Engineering Inc., a civil engineering consulting firm that provides construction oversight services at the state, county, and local levels. She has worked in transportation construction oversight services for over 10 years and has experience with large-scale projects and high-volume, high-speed roadways. She is a member of AAUW, the Society of Women Engineers, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. She also mentors young people who want to pursue a career in engineering.



Travis Johnson is a proud UW-Platteville graduate (Class of 2022). He is a civil engineer with over three years of experience at JT Engineering. Travis specializes in the design and construction of city streets, state highways, interstates, bridges, and roundabouts. Outside of engineering, he plays trumpet and participated in seven different sports growing up.

Electronics

Flash and Buzz Circuitry

Kat Ray, Software Developer, Yahara Software

Discover the components that enable your electronic devices to perform as you intend. Get your own kit to create circuits that make LED lights flash, and buzzers wail in response to touch, light, and other inputs, along with resistors, capacitors, and a variety of switches. The kit includes ten projects that increase in complexity, offering interesting challenges. The components are reusable, so you can continue learning and experimenting as you disassemble and recreate new circuit projects after the workshop.



Kat Ray is a software developer at Yahara Software, a Madison-based consulting firm that works with clients across many industries to create custom software solutions for their business needs. Kat's current project is an application for biology research labs specializing in cellular regenerative medicine. She is passionate about STEM outreach and education and volunteers with organizations that aim to increase minority representation in tech fields. Her free time is usually spent rock climbing, jogging, cooking, crocheting, reading, or listening to podcasts.

Forensic Science

Bust Crimes with Technology

Detective Erin Johnson, Janesville Police Department

You have probably seen detective shows and movies, but do you know how technology and science are used to solve real-world crimes? Do you have what it takes to be a crime scene investigator? Jump into an investigation to find and gather evidence using technology to unravel a crime scene. Law enforcement works closely with the crime lab to analyze evidence, including fingerprints, shoeprints, firearms, DNA, blood stains, tool impressions, and more. Experience it firsthand!



Erin Johnson is a crime-solving enthusiast with a knack for cracking the toughest cases. Specializing in crime scene investigation since 2016, she is dedicated to bringing justice to the community by uncovering the truth. Detective Johnson graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Platteville with a criminal justice major and a forensic investigation minor. Let's work together to make our communities safer! In her free time, she enjoys home renovation projects.

Geology

Model Earthquakes with a Slinky

Dr. Prajukti Bhattacharyya, Professor of Geology, UW-Whitewater

Learn about plate tectonics, seismic action, and the latest science used to predict earthquakes. Generate S- and P-waves with a slinky, design and test earthquake-resistant structures with a shake table, examine earthquake measurements, and investigate other related topics such as volcanoes and tsunamis.



Prajukti (Juk) Bhattacharyya is a Professor in the Department of Geography, Geology, and Environmental Science at UW-Whitewater. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 2000. Her background is in "hard rock geology" and geoscience education. She teaches courses on volcanoes, structural geology, rocks and minerals, plate tectonics, and environmental geology. Her research interests range from geochemical analyses of igneous and metamorphic rocks to volcanic activities. She is also involved in STEM education research.

Medicine

Surgical Intern for a Day

Dr. Christine Chuppa, OB/GYN, Fort HealthCare

Dr. Alison Klimesh, Family Medicine, Fort HealthCare

Medicine is the ultimate helping profession. You may help to bring a new life into the world or save another life from ending. In this workshop with "a peel," you will scrub and gown up for surgery, place sutures on a banana, and perform a local injection and biopsy of an orange. You will learn sterile techniques and surgical skills under the guidance of physicians at Fort Healthcare Center for Women's Health. Join us for a close and revealing peek into the world of medical careers.



Christine Chuppa, MD, earned a degree in Women's Studies. Zoology, MD from UW-Madison, and completed an OB/Gyn residency at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She enjoys caring for women throughout every stage of life. Dr. Chuppa is interested in obstetrics, minimally invasive surgery, infertility, and cancer screening/prevention. She enjoys spending time with her family, loves traveling, theater, music, all things Disney, and her cats.



Allison Klimesh, MD, is a graduate of the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine in Iowa City. She was drawn to family medicine because it offers the unique opportunity to care for patients across all stages of life, while managing a wide range of health conditions. She enjoys yoga, embroidery, and reading, and she loves spending time kayaking on the Rock River and discovering more of the natural beauty in Jefferson County.

Physics

Build a Solar-Powered Racer

Heather Steuri, Technology Resiliency Manager, Alliant Energy

Traci Hohn, Lead Human Resource Business Partner, Alliant Energy

Are you ready to unleash your creativity and innovation by building your very own solar-powered car? Using kits, you'll learn about solar energy, circuit construction, and engineering mechanics. No experience is required, and you will even get to race your car against others! This hands-on activity not only teaches the principles of renewable energy but also empowers young minds to think critically and solve real-world problems.



Heather Steuri is the Technology Resiliency Manager at Alliant Energy, where she has worked for over 25 years. She is responsible for ensuring that critical business systems and processes that rely on information technology services remain available. Heather is a graduate of UW-Whitewater with a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration in Information Technology. When she is not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, three cats, and being outdoors riding motorcycles and snowmobiles.



Traci Hohn is the Lead Human Resource Business Partner at Alliant Energy, where she has worked for 20 years. She earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resources from UW-Whitewater. Traci is responsible for providing comprehensive human resource support from leading initiatives in employee relations, workforce planning, talent and performance management, employee engagement, learning development, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. When she is not at work, she loves spending time outdoors with her husband, boys, and dogs.

Robotics

Engineering Robots of All Sizes

Laura Masbruch, Computer Science teacher, Whitewater High School

Team Ferradermis, Whitewater High School students

Work with members of Whitewater High School's FIRST Robotics Competition Team, Ferradermis, to learn about robots that are big and small. Get hands-on experience programming autonomous vehicles with micro:bit microcontrollers. Also, learn about the 125-pound robot custom-built by the high school team for a recent competition and get hands-on operating experience with the big bot.



Laura Masbruch teaches computer science and math at Whitewater High School. Her favorite courses to teach are Digital Electronics and AP Computer Science. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh with a degree in secondary education with a concentration in mathematics and a minor in computer science.



Veterinary Medicine

Pets Make the Best Patients

Dr. Janet Gildner, Whitewater Veterinary Hospital

Dr. Avonlea Odling, Whitewater Veterinary Hospital

Do you love animals and want to keep them healthy and safe? Veterinary medicine might be the perfect career for you! Join us for a peek into the world of veterinary medicine. Use a stethoscope, examine tissue through a microscope, view radiographs (x-rays), and meet a couple of special patients to see why we say, "Animals really do make the best patients!"



Janet Gildner, DMV, is a small animal veterinarian at Whitewater Veterinary Hospital. She graduated from the UW-Madison veterinary school. She has worked in private practice for 38 years. She continues to learn about animals, their behavior, and how to treat their illnesses and injuries. Janet enjoys getting to know these amazing creatures as the unique individuals they are and helping their people. Outside of the clinic, she loves her own animals, kids, gardening, kayaking, and enjoying nature.



Avonlea Odling, DMV, grew up on a small farm in Elkhorn. She showed animals in 4-H and FFA. She graduated from St. George Veterinary School in 2025. She is passionate about cattle reproduction, including embryo transfers. Her days include checking on the health of cows at dairy farms, performing surgeries, and delivering calves. There is never a dull moment in the veterinary field, and she is continuously expanding her knowledge and learning new techniques!

Parent Sessions (choose 3)

Internet Scams that Target Kids

Eric Kuznacic, Owner, Why The Fuss? Technology Solutions

Internet scams aimed at children exploit their trust and inexperience to steal personal information or money. Scammers frequently use platforms popular with young people, such as social media and online gaming sites, and employ psychological manipulation, such as creating a sense of urgency or a "fear of missing out" (FOMO) over a prize or in-game item. Learn more about strategies parents can use to help protect their children from phishing, fake giveaways, catfishing, and sextortion.

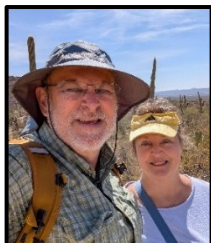


Eric Kuznacic is a web professional based in Janesville who runs his own digital consultancy, *Why The Fuss? Technical Solutions*. He built his first website in 1995 and has watched the online world grow and evolve over three decades. He spends his days building websites and helping small businesses and nonprofits navigate the ever-changing online landscape. Away from work, Eric enjoys spending time with his wife, Katie, and their dog, Leon, at their property in the Driftless Region of southwest Wisconsin.

Nurturing Curiosity: What Parents Can Do to Support a Kid's STEM Journey

Deb Thiel, RD, MPH registered dietitian, retired health care systems manager, spouse & mom.

Dick Thiel, author and wildlife biologist, spouse & dad.



Deb and Dick worked in the biological science field and raised two very science-minded daughters who are successful in their careers. They have mentored many young people over the years and look forward to conveying what they learned with you. They will share their experience and lead a discussion on how parents can support their STEM kids, considering potential hurdles and roadblocks, and ways to help along the way.

Science Opens Doors to STEM

Dr. Jessica Bonjour, Co-chair, Department of Chemistry, UW-Whitewater

The world of science careers is broad and full of possibilities. Join the conversation to ask questions and get guidance on how to talk with your teen about turning their interests and passions into a potential career in science. Discover how a strong foundation in science can open doors to a wide range of fields that may seem unrelated at first—such as business, fine arts, journalism, technology, and engineering. Not everyone will be a biologist, but scientific thinking helps us better understand the world we live in and be informed citizens.



Dr. Jessica Bonjour teaches chemistry courses for non-science majors as well as organic chemistry. She has served in a variety of leadership roles on campus, including Science Outreach Coordinator and co-chair of the Department of Chemistry. Originally from a small town in central Missouri, Dr. Bonjour earned her undergraduate degree at Truman State University and completed her graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Outside of work, she is actively involved with a local cat rescue, where she fosters kittens.

What's Math Good For, Anyway?

Dr. Hayley Bertrand, Ph.D., Department of Mathematics, UW-Whitewater

Math can be a polarizing subject—students often either love it or hate it. Even if your child does like math (but especially if they don't), you might be wondering: What is math good for, and why bother learning it? In this session, we will discuss what a major in math looks like; it's not just calculus! And use this to explore why mathematical knowledge is valuable in the workforce, what careers you might pursue with a degree in math, and why a math minor is beneficial for majors in other subjects.



Dr. Hayley Bertrand is a professor of mathematics at UW-Whitewater. She does research in pure mathematics. While she teaches a variety of classes, she especially enjoys teaching students studying to be math teachers. Hayley grew up in northeastern Wisconsin and graduated from St. Norbert College. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. from Indiana University. Her hobbies include reading, hiking, gardening, baking, and interior design.