

SUU museums partner to teach science with art and play

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Category: Academics

Imagine that you are a raging thunderstorm. What can humans do to slow you down and stop flooding? This is what K-12 visitors are asked when they come to the 2015 Fall Education Program developed by the Garth and Jerri Frehner Museum of Natural History in conjunction with the Braithwaite Fine Art Gallery at Southern Utah University. The two institutions partner every year to pair science with art to teach K-12 students about both fields. Dr. Jacqueline Grant, Director of the Frehner Museum, works with SUU graduate in the Masters of Fine Arts Administration program and SUU undergraduate students to develop science programming that compliments art exhibits at the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery.

“Scientists are far more creative than most people assume,” said Dr. Grant. “When we pair science with art it is more engaging to general audiences such as elementary school children.” The Fall Education Program, which is sponsored this year by in part by the National Science Foundation through iUTAH, has reached over 2,000 K-12 per year for the last three years. The scientific topic this year is green infrastructure, specifically green roofs. SUU is home to one of the few green roofs in southern Utah, which helps to insulate the building and slow down storm water runoff.

SUU undergraduate education and science majors help K-12 students visualize how green roofs work through play and art. They developed a game in which some children are green roof plants, and some are wild storms. Storm-kids touched by a plant have to slow down and release their water and energy more slowly than storm-kids on a traditional roof. “The game has been so enthusiastically received that I’ve received requests from SUU professors to ask the storm-kids to be a little quieter –especially when undergraduates are taking exams,” said Dr. Grant.

SUU undergraduates then work with the children to teach them about the art of assemblage, which is art made by grouping found or related objects. Learning about the art of assemblage and viewing the ABC: Assemblage, Book Art, Collage exhibit at the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery, facilitates a lesson about how modern scientists and artists work together. SUU undergraduates teach the children about the science behind green infrastructure and then put them in teams to create assemblages of green infrastructure science. The program and exhibit run through Nov. 7, 2015.

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