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## 2010-07-23: Shooting for the stars

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## Shooting for the stars



Forty-seven middle-schoolers participated in the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp, hosted by Northeastern University. Photo by Lauren McFalls.

**July 23, 2010**

You wouldn't think forty-seven middle-schoolers and their homemade bottle rockets would make for a great combination.

But you'd be proved wrong at the ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp, hosted by Northeastern University and housed at John D. O'Bryant High School, in Roxbury.

The two-week camp is open to middle-school students with a strong interest in math and science, giving them the chance to work alongside Northeastern faculty, staff and students on projects that increase their knowledge and experience in the areas of science,

technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

For the bottle-rocket challenge, twelve teams of three to four students had about an hour to design and build their missiles. The winning team, named the Orange Man Group, used a 2-liter bottle, paper and tape to build a rocket that stayed airborne for nine seconds.

"Watching the rocket fly so high into the air was totally awesome," says James Joutras, a member of the winning team, who will enter the eighth grade in Hyde Park this fall. His fellow teammates, all thirteen years old, were Rafael Kinsella, of Roslindale; Griffin Aldrich, of Waltham; and Dylan Steefel, of Milton.

Taking time to talk their ideas through provided an extra boost, says Steefel: "We definitely learned how to work better as a team, and that effort helped us win."

During a day filled with space-related activities, the students heard from Bernard Harris, former NASA astronaut and the first African American to perform a spacewalk, and Al Sacco, former NASA astronaut and a chemical-engineering professor at Northeastern.

Rachel Gaudet, an eleven-year-old from Lynn who participated in the camp last year, returned for the day to tell current campers about her experience. "It is hard to find programs like this where I live, and it is important for kids interested in science to have this kind of experience," says Gaudet, who wants to be a robotics engineer.

Throughout their time at camp, the middle schoolers take part in hands-on activities in science labs. At Northeastern's Marine Science Center, for instance, they saw live animals and learned about marine ecosystems.

"The goal of this program is to engage young students in STEM subjects, to help them build the confidence to succeed both inside and outside the classroom," says Claire Duggan, director of programs and partnerships at **Northeastern's Center for STEM Education**.

The free program runs in 30 universities across the country. Northeastern is the only New England campus selected to host the program.

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