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FEATURED

Garner Holt camp combines education with imagination

By BENJAMIN PURPER Reporter Redlands Community News Apr 5, 2019



Elementary school students practice making small robots run around in circles.

Redlands Community News photo by Benjamin Purper

Inside Garner Holt Productions' studio in Redlands, an animatronic hawk screeches a welcome. "Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to re-imagine education in San Bernardino and the world?"

The hawk, affectionately named "Hawkie Balboa," was created by students from Arroyo Valley High School with help from Garner Holt Productions, the world's leading producer of animatronics.

It's part of "Education through Imagination," an educational division of Garner Holt Productions that describes itself as "a team of educators and industry professionals dedicated to producing world-class educational programs and resources to provide students with a with a strong foundation in creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship."

During the weeklong spring break camp, students create an animatronic show using Garner Holt's "robots," blank animatronic figures that students can dress up and program to be animals or historical figures. One group of students is creating an animatronic rhinoceros to warn about the dangers of rhino extinction.

"Oftentimes teachers might ask their students to study a topic and write a report or study a topic and do a PowerPoint, study a topic and do an iMovie," said Ryan Rainbolt, director of educational programs at Garner Holt. "Here, now students can study a topic and demonstrate their learning by putting together an animatronic show."

"It really requires them to experience a variety of different careers and industry sectors from script-writing to voice acting to computer programming to lighting and sound to costuming, sculpting, painting, digital media."

Dimitri Chronopoulos, program specialist at Arroyo Valley High School, said the high school has seven different college and career academies.

"Every academy has a different career focus but all have opportunity for either career certificates within high school, articulated agreements with community college so you get college credit, but also too there's a college component as well so if they wanted to go and do advanced learning within those fields, they have that opportunity or they could go right out of high school, hopefully if that was their choice they can go into the career field that they've gravitated towards," Chronopoulos said.

According to Chronopoulos, "Education through Imagination" is a way to tie all the academies together.

"By creating animatronic shows, students from all the academies — whether they're engineering, teaching or digital media-focused — are able to strengthen their existing skills and be exposed to new ones."

The hope is that the partnership between Garner Holt and Arroyo Valley High School will lead to one big animatronic project the entire school can share.

“What they're working on individually is a smaller version of hopefully what the Garner Holt production created over at the Lincoln Shrine in Redlands,” he said.

“We're creating four small shows, but ultimately we want to create a thematic project for each academy on our campus to work on throughout the year, but then one big one for the entire academy.

“So like a history of the Inland Empire, or history of San Bernardino, or the cultures of San Bernardino.”

