



Friday, April 20, 2012

CREW TEACHES CLASS: Students in the Academy for Academic Excellence's Aerospace Education Excellence program gather around a U.S. Coast Guard MH65C helicopter Thursday at the Mojave River Campus. The crew from the helicopter gave a talk about the technical and search-and-rescue operations of their work.

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TEACHING AEROSPACE PROGRAM: Jet Nassar jumps out of a U.S. Coast Guard rescue helicopter Thursday afternoon at the Academy for Academic Excellence. The Coast Guard crew of three made a visit to the school's Aerospace Education Excellence program, or AEX, an after-school aimed at as a career.

Students learn about aviation through activities speakers

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[Natasha Lindstrom, Staff Writer](#)

Want to help?:

The Lewis Center for Educational Research's Local Outreach Department is in need of volunteers for its student aviation program and several other programs offered to students throughout the High Desert.

Volunteer coordinator Laura Unferdorfer said she's looking for "anyone who's interested in helping spark an interest in learning with students."

To volunteer, contact Unferdorfer at (760) 946-5414, ext. 277 or lunferdorfer@lcer.org.

APPLE VALLEY • The children waved and cheered under the roar of an advanced rescue helicopter flying overhead, a unique treat for the students of an after-school program with airborne dreams.

On Thursday, a Coast Guard helicopter landed at the **Academy for Academic Excellence's Mojave River Campus**, and the three-man helicopter crew spent time talking with students about careers in aviation and how the helicopter works.

"It was a great response from the kids today," said Flight Mechanic Mathew Stuber. "They had wonderful questions to ask. They actually challenged us a little bit."

The group of 30 students was the latest cohort in the local Aerospace Education Excellence program, or AEX, which is based on curriculum provided by the Air Force's Civil Air Patrol and administered by the Lewis Center for Educational Research. The annual program provides students with activities, guest speakers and field trips related to the aviation industry, such as visits to Victor Valley College's School of Aviation Technology at Southern California Logistics Airport.

"They learn about what makes planes fly, what keeps them in the air and many different kinds of flights including hot air balloons, parachutes, helicopters and rockets," said Laura Unferdorfer, volunteer coordinator for the Local Outreach Department of the Lewis Center, the nonprofit that runs AAE.

The monthly after-school workshops revolve around project-based learning.

When students learned about hot air balloons, they used heat guns to fill plastic balloons and launched them to see how they move through the air. While studying parachutes, they used bandanas, strings and weights to make miniature versions to float candy bars down from a two-story building. And to get a better understanding of navigation, students were tasked with pinpointing locations on official navigational charts.

Four times a year, the local chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association will take students for rides. A select few of the students who win the program's annual essay contest also have the opportunity to learn how to do a pre-flight inspection with a flight instructor and log their first half hour of personal flying time. Students enroll in the program on a first-come, first-serve basis, with classes beginning in November, and they're charged a \$30 registration fee. Thursday marked this year's last AEX class, but the students still have one more excursion. On May 5, the group will tour hangars at the Apple Valley Airport.

Chief photographer Jim Quigg contributed to this report.

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