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**For Immediate Release:**

**From Tees to Tesla – Sparking the Passion for Learning**

Timing, connections, opportunities, follow-through; the fertile grounds for learning can be tilled, sown, and watered when keen educators, passionate about teaching and learning, and parents, alert to the world of educational possibilities for their sons and daughters, support young minds. Such a sequence occurred this July; only one example of how education pursued during the halcyon days of summer can continue to foster the lifelong love of learning in a child's development.

Our story began during Garden City Public School's Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) held at Stratford Avenue School. SEP offers a myriad of hands-on activities from cooking and rocketry to photography and athletics. The four-week program welcomed over 500 pre-K to rising high school seniors per week this July to hallways filled with music, laughter, and some pretty serious brain work. While the program's oldest students typed on laptops to create essays for their fall college applications, Pre-K students created arts, crafts, and played reading games; and elementary students learned digital photography, sign language, and created heat-transferred tee shirt designs in computer class.

Making the interest-to-enrichment connection is critical to fostering deeper learning in students; it's something veteran teachers do as second nature. Such was the case in our tale with SEP assistant director Miss Virginia McCavera, second grade teacher at Stratford during the school year, and one student attending the summer program.

While Miss McCavera was escorting Dr. Knight, the district's coordinator of public information, to take photographs of the SEP activities on July 21<sup>st</sup>, the pair visited the computer lab where retired Stewart School librarian and SEP educator Mr. Jim McAleese was teaching a lesson involving heat-transferred prints for tee shirts using computers and a hot iron. One student arranged and printed a collage of portraits of scientists and inventors that inspired him on the special heat-transfer paper and brought it to Mr. McAleese for the ironing. Dr. Knight, eager to capture the moment of transfer with a digital camera, noted that the student had included inventor Nikola Tesla (1856-1943) in the collage. A short conversation ensued about Tesla – both the student and Dr. Knight were fans – and then Miss McCavera led the way to another classroom where more learning and photo opportunities were taking place.

That night, Dr. Knight received an email invitation from the soon-to-be-opened Tesla Science Center at Wardencllyffe in Shoreham, Long Island, to a special summer exhibit about Nikola Tesla, including several hands-on models of his inventions, at the

Ward Melville Cultural Center in Stony Brook Village. Dr. Knight forwarded the invitation to Miss McCavera in the hope that she could share the information with the student who had selected Tesla for his tee shirt. The problem was, Dr. Knight didn't know the student's name. Miss McCavera immediately jumped in, did some research (remember, there were hundreds of students in the program scattered in a dozen or more classrooms that day), learned the student's name (a Stewart School student), and forwarded the invitation to the child's parents.

Sure enough, at the opening reception of the Tesla exhibit a few days later, there was the SEP student, Joseph, proudly wearing his Tesla tee shirt. Joseph and his dad were enjoying the display and models of just a few examples of the over 250 patents Tesla held. The father and son learned about Tesla's invention of alternating current (sometimes erroneously credited to Thomas Edison), of broadcasting messages wirelessly (credited to Marconi), and Tesla's vision for wireless communications available to all people all over the world (sound familiar?). The first remote-controlled vehicle, a model of the small boat Tesla built and piloted on the Long Island Sound while standing atop Wardencllyffe, was included in the special exhibit, as was a spectacular 2017 Tesla car. For other interested Tesla-philes, the exhibit in Stony Brook runs through September 4<sup>th</sup>, open 7 days, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.: <http://www.teslasciencecenter.org/2017/06/summer-exhibit-nikola-tesla-past-present-future/>

Joseph spoke with several of the Tesla exhibit educators affiliated with the Tesla Science Center located on the grounds of the inventor's Wardencllyffe laboratory (designed by architect and friend Stanford White), and experienced, first-hand, the wireless transference of energy emitted by a Tesla Coil as he held a fluorescing tube. "My husband and Joseph were thrilled to be there and enjoyed every minute of the exhibit!!!!" shared Joseph's mom when they returned home.

Everyone in attendance appeared to come away with the knowledge that Nikola Tesla was a true visionary whose life's work continues to be evidenced all around us in the "modern" world.

This is just one story about timing, connections, opportunities, and follow-through. You just never know when the next Tesla will come along. The combination of keen teachers like Virginia McCavera and Jim McAleese and parents like Joseph's can be just the spark needed to ignite the curiosity and creativity of our next generation of inventors.

Congratulations to director Joe Papa for another successful Summer Enrichment Program, to Miss McCavera for going the extra mile, to all the students who attended this year's SEP, and to the supportive parents who know that learning doesn't take summer vacation!



**Caption for7-21-17IMG\_2534SEPJimTShirts.jpg:**

In a SEP computer class, students created collages on special heat-transfer papers to apply to tee shirts. Here, teacher Jim McAleese stretches the tee shirt to release the special paper and reveal the finished design.



**Caption for7-21-17IMG\_2541SEPTeslaTee.jpg:**

Joseph created this heat-transferred collage of scientists and inventors that inspire him during the district's Summer Enrichment Program. Nikola Tesla is pictured on the bottom left.



**Caption for 7-29-17IMG\_0685JosephTesla.jpg:**

Joseph holding a fluorescing tube within range of a Tesla Coil at the Tesla Science Center Exhibit in Stony Brook.



**Caption for 7-21-17IMG\_2516SEPRocket.jpg:**

A favorite activity at the Summer Enrichment Program is model rocketry. Here students shoot off the rockets they built during the program.



**Caption for 7-21-17IMG\_2524SEPHammeringGirl.jpg:**

Woodworking is another SEP favorite – students experience sawing, sanding, assembling, and finishing useful items.



**Caption for 7-21-17IMG\_2543SEPPhotography.jpg:**

Students in SEP's photography class used teamwork to form, photograph, print, and assemble images of the word, "summer" for a final project.



**Caption for7-21-17IMG\_2529SEPCollegeEssay.jpg:**

Getting a jump on the college application process, rising seniors were hard at work in SEP's College Essay Writing class.