

Students Teaching Students Science

High schoolers master energy knowledge, presentation skills

By Shawnee A. Barnes

A young generation of student scientists is teaching the next generation of budding scientists on Sundays at the Sciencenter.

Every Sunday at 2 p.m., high school students become the experts and demonstrate their knowledge of how energy and chemistry work during the “Energy Explo” and “Chemsations” programs on alternating Sundays at the Sciencenter.

The “Energy Explo” is a new program taught by local high school students that looks at how different forms of energy work, including sustainable energy sources such as solar power. The program connects high school students with graduate students from Cornell University, who act as mentors.

“We feel it’s very important for high school students to learn the content and be experts and to not just get the presentation skills but the skills in the science as well,” said Michelle Kortenaar, of Ithaca, director of education at the Sciencenter.

For Ithaca High School junior Katie Henderson, it’s a chance to impart her love of science and make a difference.

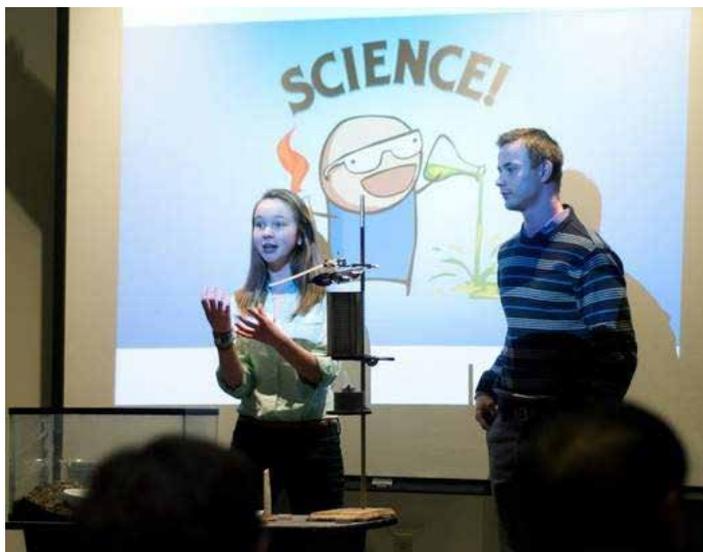
“It’s amazing to think that some of these kids are going to grow up and become our scientists of the future and they will know things we will never know. It’s amazing to know that I can empower them to do this,” said Henderson, 16.

Students develop leadership skills, said Kortenaar, as they present their experiments to audience members as young as two years old.

“It’s really nice for kids to see older kids doing this. It feels like a stepping stone. You may not be able to imagine yourself as a scientist, but you can imagine yourself as a high school student entrusted in science. And as a high school student interested in science, you can begin to imagine what the next step would be,” Kortenaar said.

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Katie Henderson, 16, a junior at Ithaca High School, and Peter Karandeyev, 18, a senior at Lansing High School, put on a demonstration about energy at the Sciencenter in Ithaca. Photo by Robyn Wishna