

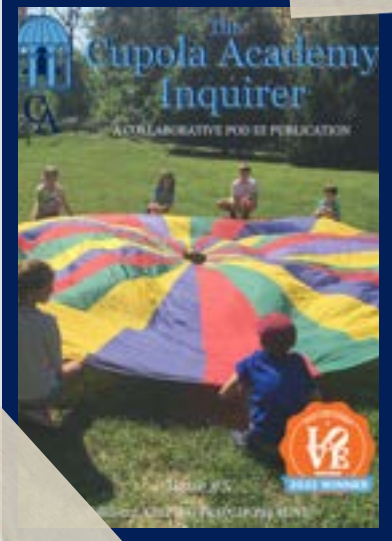
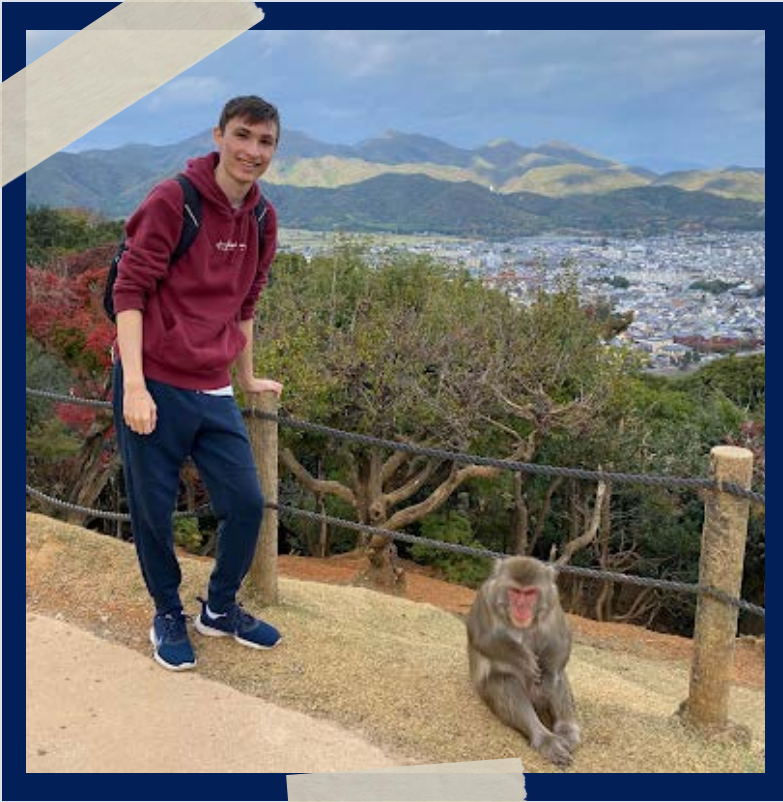


CA

The CUPOLA ACADEMY

Inquirer

A Collaborative Pod 3 Publication
Issue #5



Spring 2023 - Memories of the Year



CA Inquirer Staff

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On the Cover:

This year's graduating student is Connor Moyer. This cover is dedicated to him and the memories we've made this year. Featured are this year's past covers of the CA Inquirer, a heart-shaped rock signed by CP3 and the South Mountain YMCA Counselors, CP2 at BMFI, and photos of Connor Moyer and CYP.

End-of-Year Events: Symposium and Graduation

by Maddie B-C and Ella G

On May 20th, CA enjoyed dinner in honor of our 2023 graduate, Connor Moyer! There was a slideshow of Connor through the years and other CYP and CP3 youth wrote Word Presents to him. Mike and Alexandra created a keepsake book that included photos of Connor's time at CA and word presents. As well as Graduation, CA hosted another Symposium. In preparation for the Symposium, youth in the Constructing Your Path program chose a topic they were interested in and made a dynamic visual presentation on their research. The topics chosen were "How Traditional High School Can Demotivate Students" by Connor M., "Empathy In The Medical Field" by Abby B-C, and "Doping In Sports" by Noah G. The whole night went smoothly and the youth did an excellent job!



"Homeschooling cleared an educational path for me that I didn't know existed, one that lead to invaluable opportunities and experiences during a time when school didn't excite me. Everything that I learned and experienced during my time as a homeschooler, from the people I met to what I discovered about my self, is more valuable to me than anything I've experienced before." - Connor Moyer

Favorite Memories from Cupola Academy's 2022-23 Year

by Sebastian E and Maddie B-C

It's been a busy year at Cupola Academy. To review the year, we asked all of the programs to share their highlights.

One of CC's highlights of the year was making a grocery store. Cady liked how many "food" items there were and liked when Henryk took a bread bag and used fabric to make bread. Lincoln loved it all but really enjoyed "shopping." Oscar really enjoyed how many vegetables there were at the CA grocery store. Henryk really liked the process of collecting all the food. Casper really enjoyed "checking people out." Leila Pe. really liked how much people reused stuff and how families gave empty boxes to the store. She also liked naming the store "CA Buy Buy No," meaning: Please stay at our store. Making money out of paper was also a highlight for Leila. Maren really liked making the designs on the bags and being the cashier. Seneca enjoyed how funny Kavi was and really enjoyed creating money and how it could be any shape.

One of the best parts of the year as voted on by CP1 was designing dioramas, where they decorated shoe boxes with unique designs based on the book *Chasing Vermeer*. *Chasing Vermeer* is an award-winning art mystery novel by author Blue Balliett. CP1's other highlight of the year was listening to CA parent Mike Holmes talk about and share his work. Mike Holmes is a comic artist and is well-known for his work on the book series *Wings Of Fire*. He demonstrated how he draws his illustrations digitally, and drew a dragon on the whiteboard based on CP1's requests that they named "Crystal Blue."

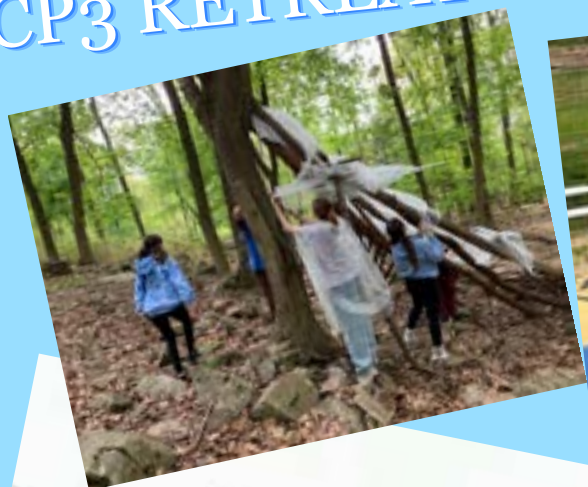
CP2 determined through a vote that their favorite part of the year was working on their LEGO stop-motion animation projects with Keville Bowen, a local comic artist. The stop-motion movies were about environmental issues such as food waste, biodiversity, and water pollution. The movies were presented at Bryn Mawr Film Institute on the big screen on Tuesday, May 9th. CP2 had been working on the project in partnered groups for two months, incorporating research on their environmental topic with their LEGO stop-motion animations.

CP3 said that the retreat was their highlight of the year. The retreat was a three-day camping experience at the South Mountain YMCA camp where the youth and facilitators did multiple team-building and learning activities. Overall, they agreed that it was their favorite part of the year.

CYP said that their favorite part of the year was going to Orlando, Florida. While there, they visited Wekiwa Springs State Park for swimming in crystal-clear springs and hiking and nature observation on the beautiful trails. On day 2 the group volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in Seminole County. While there, they helped to paint doors and finish some exterior painting on homes that are built for people in need. They also moved sod to help with the installation of a septic system. The group has created an even stronger bond, and they made memories from grocery shopping and cooking to watching a fireworks show at Disney World.

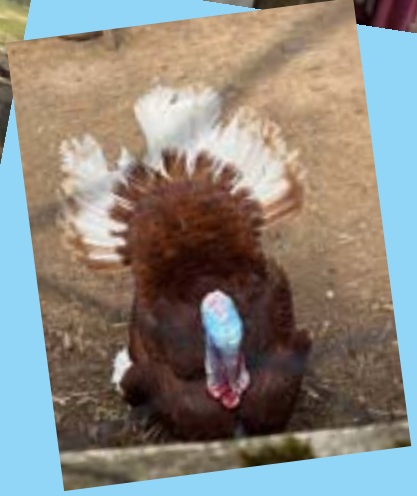
Looking forward to an equally engaging 2023/2024 year!

CP3 RETREAT



CC, CP1, CP2

COLONIAL PLANTATION TRIP



Interview with CA Graduate Connor Moyer

by June Hackman

What has been your favorite part about your CA journey?

This is tough because I've learned so much and have had many incredible experiences during my time at CA, but what created those experiences and kept me coming back year after year is the community. I've always really liked the sense of community associated with small schools/organizations because of the feeling of being a part of a growing team, a team that shares similar values, is welcoming to everyone, and learns from each other and together to get better and better. I think CA embodies a lot of that. I took a leap of faith on this whole homeschooling thing, and the fact that I'm preparing to graduate from CA five years later is a testament to how the community, students and facilitators treated me.

What skill(s) have you been able to develop with this approach to learning?

I've definitely developed some time management skills. I've gotten better with planning ahead as well because when you're homeschooled, each year can look so different. You're not always told what you should take and how you should do it like in traditional school, so I've learned to think ahead and plan out my education which was pretty fun. Also, I think the skills associated with being a more independent learner, which come in handy for further education and beyond, came more naturally to me as a homeschooler.

How was homeschooling through high school different from homeschooling through middle school?

Homeschooling through high school was better for me simply because of experience. Each year I learned more and more about it so I was able to make improvements as I went. Of course right as it seems like I'm really getting it down, I'm graduating, but I think it only got better as I went along. I will say that homeschooling in high school has more of a focus on preparing for what comes next, whatever that may be, by being able to take community college classes as well as other prep things at CA. I really appreciated that.

What opportunities and experiences did you get to take advantage of at CA that you wouldn't have been able to if you were in traditional school or just doing school at home?

This is easily the collaboration opportunities present at CA. The focus on group work and collaboration is something I noticed on day one, and it works wonders to get to know people as well as working on your social and teamwork skills. This isn't as prominent in traditional school and certainly not school at home.

What did you find surprising about homeschooling when you first made the transition from public school?

I think the most surprising thing was learning just how flexible it can be. Coming from a traditional school, I always thought that there were specific guidelines and rules you had to follow for education, no matter how you did it. When I started homeschooling, however, I realized that I could basically shape my education to better fit me and my learning style. This definitely came as a surprise and played a part in my decision to continue homeschooling through high school.

What has been your favorite Cupola event and why?

I think the fundraiser event we did earlier this year was really fun. The process of planning it and piecing it together with other students was fun, and I think the event itself turned out to be really successful. Also, being able to host it at the Bryn Mawr Film Institute was awesome, and it really added to the experience.

What achievement are you most proud of and why?

As far as my educational path goes, my biggest achievement isn't a tangible thing like an award or trophy. Instead, I think the achievement that I'm most proud of, which homeschooling played a huge part in, is self-discovery. Over my time as a homeschooler, I've had the opportunity to branch out and try new things, and that led to my discovering of multiple new hobbies and interests to explore. I've been able to put time into passion projects surrounding these interests, and I enjoy the challenge of teaching myself new things. I've also discovered a love of traveling. I truly don't think I would have discovered all of these things if I hadn't switched to homeschooling, and that's more valuable to me than any award or accolade I've received.



What are some specific examples of new interests and hobbies you discovered and explored?

I enjoy the challenge of teaching myself new things that excite me, and homeschooling has allowed me to do this with whatever came to mind. For example, I've been spending a lot of time learning 3D modeling and design using software such as Blender. I also started learning about game design and development as well, which I find very interesting. I discovered these things during my time as a homeschooler, and the flexibility of homeschooling is what allowed me to further explore them.

What are some favorite trips you have taken during your time as a homeschooler?

I've been able to travel to many amazing places during my homeschooling journey. Some of these places include Sarasota, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; Denver, Colorado; and Boston, Massachusetts. Earlier this year I also had the opportunity to spend two weeks in Japan, which was easily one of the best trips of my life. Multiple of these were only possible because of the more flexible style of learning that homeschooling provides.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering homeschooling?

One of the best things about homeschooling is that it's not just about the here and the now, it's about your future as well. It gives the opportunity to get a head start on your future education. It allows you to put more focus on what you want to do after school, and it gives you the ability to try new things if you don't quite know yet. But most importantly, it lets you see education from a new lens, so if you don't think the style of traditional school fits you, or if you don't think it supports your future educational goals, this alternate path could be exactly what you're looking for.

If you could change one thing about your educational journey, what would it be?

To be honest, nothing immediate comes to mind. I feel fortunate to be able to look back on my educational journey and say that I'm pretty proud of the choices I made that ultimately led to following this path, and I wouldn't want to risk any change affecting that.

What will you miss the most about Cupola Academy?

Definitely the people. I've met a lot of awesome people over my time spent at Cupola who all had an impact on my overall experience. Obviously my groupmates, but also facilitators and other students that make up the community. I really value my time spent with all of them, and I already know I'll miss them.



Rummery Family Interview

by June Hackman

Names and ages of family members/programs youth are in?

Dana, Ki, Rukia (11) in CP2 and Cosi (9) in CP1.

How do you spend your days outside of CA?

Our time outside of CA always starts with the questions, "What do we want to do today?" and "What do we have to do today?" In our free time we like to spend as much time as possible outside in nature - hiking, camping, generally just playing in the Wissahickon, and enjoying community parks and gardens. Rukia is involved in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and Cosette is always exploring new interests. Her newest excitement is wanting to learn to play the flute!

Are there any curricula you have found helpful?

We don't use many curricula but really un-school, following the girl's interests and using the many museums/libraries/experiences around Philadelphia to support their interests. We do sometimes use Miquon Math, Cuisenaire rods, Khan academy, and Outschool courses. Podcasts are a huge favorite in our household with the girls learning and enjoying Brains On, Wow in the World, Cool Facts about Animals, Circle Round, Forever Ago, Creature Feature, and The Past and the Curious to name a few!

What are your youth(s) favorite part(s) about CA?

Rukia loves science and working in groups, which was the major draw for her to join CA! Cosi enjoys cooking, playing with her friends, and the art projects.

What brought you to CA?

We just happened to check it out on a whim and the girls were drawn to the idea that they could work on projects in groups and see them through. We, the parents, enjoy having a little more academic help outside of our home.

How long have you been homeschooling?

We have always homeschooled! Rukia went to nature preschool at the Schuylkill center, but other than that, we've always been a part of a variety of homeschooling communities, spending our days exploring and learning together.

What are the biggest challenges of homeschooling and CA?

The biggest challenge for us as adults homeschooling our children is trying not to compare our kids to traditional school kids in terms of academic progress. We have to remind ourselves that our girls are learning a wide range of things about themselves and the world that are not easily tested.

What are the biggest benefits of homeschooling and CA?

More time together as a family and really having a chance to get to know our kids and what's important to them. Having a place where we know our kids are engaged in academic exploration outside of our home. Cupola helps us answer the questions from random people and those close to us about what our homeschoolers "do." It's nice to be able to point to organizations that support our homeschooling goals and not have to explain our day-to-day to everyone.

How do you balance homeschooling with both parents working?

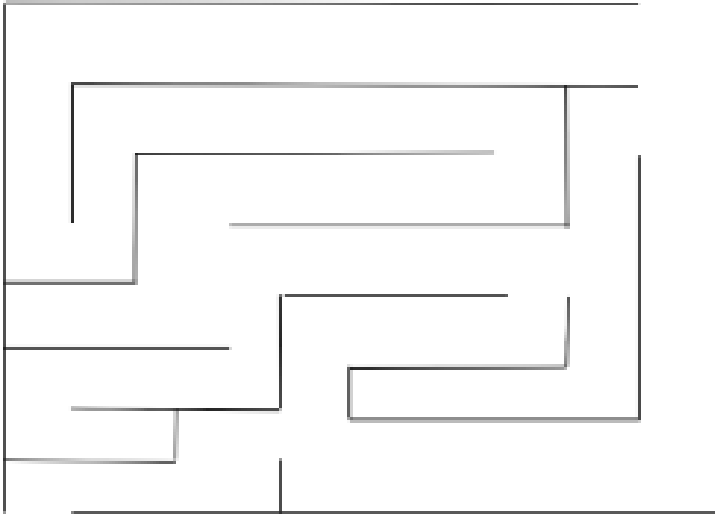
Working and homeschooling actually allows us to have balance because we all have things that feed us as individuals, separate from one another. Our work allows us to afford to send them to Cupola and other homeschooling centers, gives them a chance to connect with other adults/ kids outside of our presence, and lets us have meaningful careers. It's sometimes hard because we all enjoy spending time with one another, but it's nice to have some space as well. I also think unschooling allows us to balance work and homeschooling because we believe living and learning in this way means our kids are very happy in the now, will continue to learn what they are passionate about, and will have the support they need to be happy/successful in pursuing those passions as they grow.



GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Curated by
Cali G and Callie B-H

Start



Riddles

1. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What am I?
2. What is always in front of you but can't be seen?
3. What starts with an E, ends with an E, but only contains one letter?
4. What is so fragile that saying its name breaks it?

Answers at the bottom of the next page.

Finish

Spot the Difference:

Find five differences between these two pictures



RECIPES

Curated by
Cali G and Callie B-H

Summer Edition

Kale Mango Salad



Mediterranean Pasta
Salad



Watermelon Mint
Salad

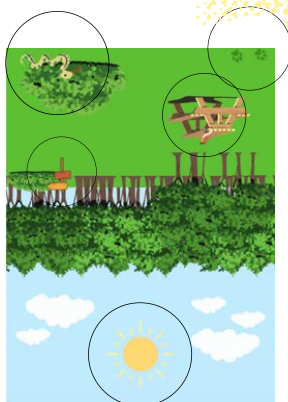


Raspberry Orange
Smoothie

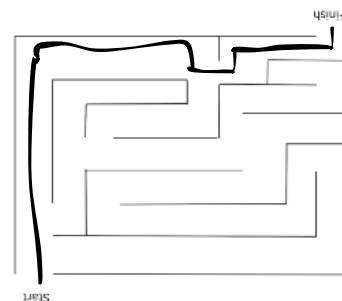


ANSWERS

Solutions for the games & activities from
the previous page



*Riddle Answers: 1. Footsteps 2. The Future 3. An
Envelope 4. Silence



Program Update: Tuesdays in CP3

with facilitators Mike, Sarah, and Dave

Tuesdays in CP3 have been very busy this spring! We have been working with CYP on a sustainable entrepreneurship project since the end of March, and the young people are excited to be bringing their visions to reality this month. The Tuesday facilitators have been working with Simona Dwass, the Makerspace Education Specialist at Fluxspace in Norristown, on this unit which integrates economics, environmental sustainability, innovative product design, and entrepreneurship. During this four-week workshop, youth teams have worked to create a “micro-business” where they have designed and produced a product that meets the definition of sustainability in one of three ways:

Upcycling: How might we reuse a product that would otherwise be recycled or trashed?

Reducing: How might we replace a product that traditionally ends up in landfills?

Improving on experience: How might we make a sustainable experience better?

Once deciding upon their design, the youth used digital and rapid manufacturing techniques to create a small run of functional products. Their production and prototyping processes have included incorporating the fundamentals of 2D and 3D design, mold making and casting, and plastic recycling. The finished products will be displayed at the End of Year Celebration, so be sure to look for them!

As a part of this unit, CP3 and CYP also took a field trip to Main Line SHIFT in Narberth to see an example of a mission-driven, sustainable business in action. We learned about the journey from concept to for-profit storefront from the two female owners/entrepreneurs and heard some of what it takes to build a business from the ground up. The youth were able to hear how the owners made some of their business and marketing decisions, and how keeping focused on their mission helped to guide them as they navigated the unavoidable uncertainty they faced when opening their first storefront in 2022.

See page 17 for information on our Independent Science Projects!



Tuesday CP3 Science With Dave

Facilitator Dave feels lucky to have spent the year exposing the CP3 young people to some Chemistry. Dave has been very pleased with the interest and enthusiasm that the young people have demonstrated. The CP3 group has been exposed to many high school-level topics including gas laws, nomenclature, atomic theory, combustion reactions, acids and bases, and thermochemistry.

Of course, the reactions that “go boom!” have been favorites. The calcium carbide cannon and the pumpkin explosion were among the most popular. Color changes were also enjoyed. The young people were given a challenge to make a rainbow of colors using an indicator and various pH solutions. A lot of creative solutions were found! When learning about hydrates, the youth saw that hydrates change color when heated, and that it is possible to determine the percentage of water in the hydrate.

Some important real-world lessons were learned. A few highlights include: why it’s necessary to have a carbon monoxide detector; how hot air balloons float; what is the difference between a scientific calorie and a food Calorie; that there are different types of each atom called isotopes; when you exercise you produce more carbon dioxide; you can burn food underwater to determine the amount of Calories; and things that have a density less than 1 gram/ml float.

Dave was also very pleased with the young people meeting the math challenges that came with some of the topics. The CP3 youth were able to graph, isolate variables, and use the factor label method to make conversions.



Program Update: Thursdays in CP3

with facilitators **Corinne and Lucy**

Thursdays in the Collaborative Pod 3 have been mainly focused on group projects and in-depth study of particular topics. The group projects allow the youth to utilize technology at CA like the laser etcher/cutter, 3-D printer, vast artistic media, and booklet-making printer in addition to the unique experience of collaborating with peers. The in-depth study enables the young people to engage with meaningful new learning, facilitated by staff with vast experience - partnership education at work!

Ongoing projects from the year include:

Board games: Youth designed and created board games that taught players about two aspects of American government. The Path to the Presidency and How a Bill Becomes a Law games took a tremendous amount of planning. The youth designed game boards and pieces, and determined the rules and gameplay. Every aspect of the game was crafted by the youth. The culmination of their work was to invite the CP2 group to test the games, which was a huge success. The games were a source of pride for the youth, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of youth taking turns borrowing the games to take home and play with their families.

CA Inquirer: For the second year, the CP3 program has published a newspaper highlighting the various goings-on at Cupola Academy. The youth use Canva, a graphic design website to create each issue. We've worked on three issues this year and have been able to refine our process. At the beginning of the year, youth chose their top three roles/assignments and had a chance to rotate through these over the course of the year and our three issues. We've practiced skills like gathering information, drafting professional email requests, writing, editing, layout, and design.

In-depth studies include:

Afrofuturism, altered books, and postcards: To introduce this topic, youth created posters in small groups to describe the cultural aesthetic of Afrofuturism. We read and discussed several short stories from this genre, including a reimagining of the day MLK Jr. was assassinated. Youth then transitioned to imagining their own worlds and using mixed-media approaches, created altered books to bring their worlds to life.

For a culminating activity, youth designed postcards from their world to trade with each other.



Rolling Warrior and Romeo and Juliet: The youth read both Judy Heumann’s memoir, *Rolling Warrior*, and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In addition to lively discussions about the memoir and learning how Heumann was a powerful activist for disability rights, youth learned about the history of protest in America. The young people learned how through boycotts, marches, literature, sit-ins, petitions, and more, Americans brought about change. We also read Shakespeare’s tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. When we met, we worked through scenes, always examining how the text is meant to be three-dimensional and reveals its meaning in performance. We also looked at performances of particular scenes to compare and contrast various productions and interpretations.

Linguistic Field Guides: From the New York Times Learning Network, a linguistic field guide is “a combination of words and images to explore the nuances of a word’s ecosystem. Like notes about a rare species of ant, linguistic field guides help readers and writers better understand how words behave: how they work in authentic sentences, where to find them, what other words or phrases they hang out with, what they sound like, and how to use them.” In pairs, youth chose words from the NYT Word of the Day Archives and used the archive database to gather additional information about their words. They were asked to write a definition (in their own words), and include part of speech, a sentence written by professionals using the word, an image that symbolizes the word, and an analysis of what they learned. Vocabulary that was chosen includes: sever, celestial, lofty, illuminate, melancholy, seasoned, extravagant, and unintelligible.

Debates: We are wrapping up the year with a few debates. The first one is: should graffiti be considered art or vandalism? Youth read through some background information outside of the program and then were prepared to write opening statements, rebuttals, and closing statements with their small groups in program. The second and final four-corners style debate was: should visual artists and musicians be worried about AI? Is it ethical for a musician/artist to use AI? Is it ethical for AI to use copyrighted art/music to learn from? The youth voted on these topics, which tied into themes that we’ve discussed throughout the year.



End-of-Year Events: May 9th Presentations

by Maddie B-C and Ella G

Each year the CP3 program youth complete Independent Science Projects. This year each youth presented a poster along with a slideshow. For this project, there were two groups: tier one (first-year) and tier two (returners to CP3). Topics in tier one were:

- “Combating Bacteria Growth With Different Cleaners,”
- “The Effect of Water Content in Organic and Standard Fruit,”
- “The Effect of Household Materials on Avocado Oxidation,”
- “Different Sugars Reacting with Yeast to Make Bread,” and
- “Testing the Distance vs. the Circumference of a Balloon Car.”

Topics in tier two were:

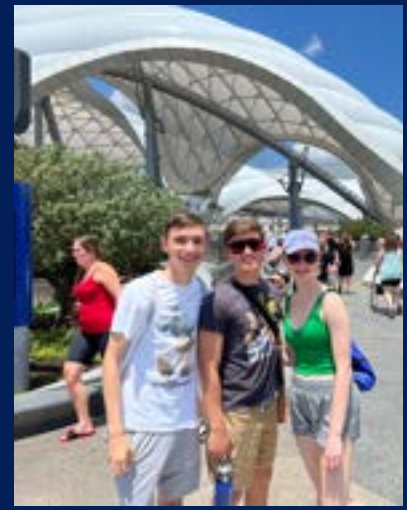
- “The Effect of Substrate Type on Rain Garden’s Ability to Reduce Nitrogen and Acidity in Rainwater Runoff,”
- “The Effect of Sugar Type on Yeast Respiration,”
- “The Effect of Wind Speed on Different Skyscraper Shapes,” and
- “The Effect of ZoomX Foam and a Carbon Fiber Plate on the Energy Storage of Running Shoes.”



CP3 facilitator, Sarah, explained, "the purpose of this long-term project is to give youth the opportunity to ask a scientific question and then use the steps of the Scientific Method to answer that question. Each young person had to design their own experiment to test their hypothesis and then collect and analyze data in order to understand the results. This cross-curricular project incorporated a wide variety of skills as the young people worked through the steps of the scientific method, drew conclusions about their findings, created a visual presentation and poster to share with the CA community, and wrote a scientific abstract summarizing their experiment. As this project was mostly completed outside of program time, it has also helped the youth build their time management and organizational skills." All nine CP3 members successfully presented their projects in front of a 50+ person crowd at Bryn Mawr Film Institute.

Another event on May 9th at BMFI was the premiere showing of the films created by CP2 and CYP. For most of the academic year, CYP worked on producing *Whispers of Woodmont*, a documentary about Father Divine, leader of the first interracial religious community in the United States that promoted desegregation and social justice. Through the process, they gleaned skills in video editing, sound design, research, and story structure. In addition and with the help of Keville Bowen, local animator and comic book artist, CP2 youth worked in partner groups to create LEGO stop-motion films. These films focused on environmental issues such as biodiversity loss, food waste, and water pollution.







Family Name: