



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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S.T.E.M. camp, where fun plays a role in learning

Participants grin and bear life under the stars

TSAILE, Ariz. — Like most kids at the recent S.T.E.M. summer camp, Chad Begay spent a lot of time outdoors and not too far away from Diné College's main campus.

Begay, 16, a student at Chinle High School, was part of a group that learned the basics of science, engineering team-building, forestry and technology — using the same study methods applied in a traditional classroom.

The first annual Science, Technology, Engineering and Math camp wound down July 7 and with good reviews. The grant-funded camp, coordinated and run by Filiberto Vecenti of Diné College's Center for Diné Teacher Education, saw 19 campers ranging in age from eleven to 17 years old participate in a myriad of outdoor learning activities. There were more than a dozen instructional presentations on botany, range management and mathematics. The participants came from schools around the Navajo Nation and parts of Apache and McKinley counties.

"I liked it because it's a non-traditional way of doing things in that you're not in an actual classroom all day long," Begay said. Begay said he wants to attend college in the future. "It was fun and you learn a lot. I think everybody liked it."

Vecenti, a 2012 environmental science and Diné studies graduate of Diné College, said the program caters to young people who show an interest in science, technology, engineering and math — hence the S.T.E.M. acronym. There's no canoeing or fishing, but campers pitch tents, prepare food and get a hands-on understanding in training and techniques about

scientific research skills, utilizing simple technologies to collect data and building research methods.

"It was a great experience for everyone involved," Vecenti said, acknowledging the Tsaile community near Diné College where the three-day camp took place.

"The students learned a lot. The community was helpful and understanding. This is already a popular program here at Diné College."

Vecenti said an engineering or robotics festival is planned for fall 2017 at Diné College's Tsaile campus.