

Launch & Learn

By TYLER GREEN

Daily Press Staff Writer

An educational program designed to boost students' interest in space industry careers has ignited the quest for knowledge with several Artesia youth.

The Launch and Learn program coordinated by Central Elementary School teacher and Artesia Public Schools' Elementary Science Coordinator, Nancy Hill, uses a hands-on approach to teach students about the intricacies of rocket science and space travel.

With support and funding from the New Mexico State University and NASA, Hill was able to host the Launch and Learn - a Summer Of Innovation program that supports Science Technology English and Math (STEM) education - that teaches kids about space and jobs in engineering.

Hill explained it is important to fuel the student's excitement about these career fields because the United States is particular-

ly lacking in producing gifted minds interested in working in those fields which has resulted in a spurt of foreign individuals working on home-land projects.

Hill explained the 40 hour Launch and Learn program that began last week has opened the students eyes to help them realize there are so many fields that come together to launch a rocket.

"It has really had an impact on their will to learn and try hard in their science classes," said Hill. "They have been here everyday, excited to learn."

Hill continued to explain, when the students leave to go home, the excitement lingers. Hill said they continue to think about what they have learned and research information on the internet in their own spare time.

The Launch and Learn consists of nearly 20 students ranging from the fifth to tenth grade.

The students built and launched water rockets, designed a Mars settlement

and studied the history of space travel and engineering among other subjects.

Hill explained the Launch and Learn is the foundation of a larger project that could potentially land one of program's projects on a rocket destined for space.

The students are working to compete in Summer Of Education (SOE) competitions supported by the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium, the educational outreach arm for Spaceport America.

The competition includes a science experiment competition where the 20 best science experiments will fly April 1, 2011 on a sounding rocket, a mission patch competition where the selected mission patch will fly on the rocket into space and be returned to the students and teachers, a student essay competition where the winner will push the 'launch' launch button and a YouTube competition for the best experiment video.



The Launch and Learn students gathered together for a 'silly' photo after launching their water rockets Thursday morning.



Nancy Hill holds a water rocket before placing it on the launcher.



Students and parents watch as a water rocket soars into the sky.



A water rocket launches into the sky.



A water rocket leaves the launch-pad.



Students inspect a water rocket that stuck its nose-cone into the ground as gravity pulled it back down to the earth.



A water rocket sits with its nose-cone buried in the ground.



Bryan Mathis inspects his egg payload as it drips out of the nose-cone of his rocket.



Jake Nelson uses an air pump to build pressure in a water rocket as Dale Atkins watches the pressure.



The inside view of the Mars Settlement greenhouse.