Dark Skies, Bright Kids! – Year 8

Who We Are

Dark Skies, Bright Kids (DSBK) is an entirely volunteer-run program out of the University of Virginia Astronomy Department with the core mission of enhancing science education by organizing out-of-school Astronomy clubs for underserved populations in Virginia. The program seeks to encourage the natural curiosity of children by helping them to explore the Universe in a close-knit social setting with fun, hands-on activities. DSBK has reached over 15,000 contact hours since Fall 2009 - reaching as far north as Washington, D.C. and as far south as Gate City, VA.

The main Goals of DSBK are:
1) to illustrate to students that science is a fun, creative, and exciting process;
2) to empower students to be curious and to ask questions;
3) to help students develop problem-solving skills;
4) to demonstrate that science is a viable career path chosen by many diverse individuals;
5) to nurture a sense of wonder and awe for the Universe;
6) to teach students basic astronomy concepts.

Astronomy Summer Camp

Day 1: Rockets and Night Sky
Day 2: Invisible Light, Comets, and Impacts
Day 3: Solar System
Day 4: Astrobiology, Stars, and Stellar Remnants
Day 5: Galaxies and Astronomy Party!

Our Astronomy Club

Our primary focus of DSBK is hosting an 8- to 10-week after-school astronomy club at a local elementary school. Each week we focus on a different topic of astronomy ranging from the solar system to galaxies to life beyond Earth. The typical format of a club is:
- Introduction
- Wiggle Time
- Activities
- Journal Time

In 2016 we made use of a generous grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to expand our reach throughout rural Virginia by hosting week-long astronomy summer camps. We held two camps: one at the Claytor Nature Study Center in Bedford, VA and one at Gate City Middle School in Gate City, VA. These condensed astronomy camps allowed us to travel much farther from the University of Virginia and reach students in underserved regions of rural central and southern Virginia.

Looking Forward

Next year DSBK will be on the road again for more astronomy summer camps as well as many other events in and around the community.

For more information, including additional activities and resources, or how you can help, visit our website at https://www.facebook.com/DarkSkiesBrightKids/