

Tech Teens teaches new technology to young adults

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Monday afternoon, the Innovation Studio was filled with 15 students from around the parish, huddled around computers, exploring the latest technology. The students were members of Tech Teens, an organization at Central Library for young adults interested in learning about and using new technology. As part of the bimonthly program, two professors from McNeese State

University led the meeting, focused on Arduino kits.

Arduino kits are small micro-controllers used to teach basic computing concepts. The kits can also be used to create any number of interactive things like simple robots, moving toy cars and light-up jewelry. Throughout the event, McNeese professors Paul Bender and Kay Kussman helped the students create projects from scratch with a program many of them were unfamiliar with.

Susan Gerhart, the young adult librarian at Central Library, runs the Tech Teens program. For most of the 15 or so students at the event, the kits were foreign to them. Gerhart said only a fraction of them had ever been introduced to the event's subject matter. Still, she said, the students were able to learn and put to use what they were being taught.

"Most of the students had not heard of Arduino before. Two of the 15 had been

introduced to it before by their parents," Gerhart said. "What they got is a sample bit of code to turn a light on and off, and they were able to modify the code to turn it on and off for certain things."

Gerhart said one of the students made the lights blink in the Morse code pattern for the student's name. One of the other teens had the lights blink to music. Eventually, they all got the hang of it. Using the Arduino kits was just one of the many introductions

the program offers.

"We've done a program in three-dimensional drawing. We've done a program in Scratch. There they learned how to take images and make them do things," Gerhart said. "It was simple code, and it helped show them what it takes to write a program and create a game."

In February, the students will learn about movie making using the library's green screen. Those interested in Tech Teens can sign up at

the library. Gerhart said the library has something to offer for all teens.

"There is a writing club, a club for gamers. There is a teen advisory group that kind of lets us know what other things the library needs," Gerhart said. "We also have an acting club that takes place during the summertime. Basically, we have a little bit of everything."

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Online: <http://calcasieulibrary.org/teens>.