



Hour of Code introduces students to computer programming

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Students in more than 100 classes in schools across northern New Mexico took an hour to delve into computer programming during the recent Hour of Code, a global program that reaches tens of millions of students around the world.

More than 65 Lab volunteers helped as children in classes from kindergarten through high school worked on a range of age-appropriate coding challenges. Schools serving the communities in Santa Fe, Taos, Española, Los Alamos, Santa Ana, Ohkay Owingeh, Cuba, Chimayo, Pojoaque, and Dixon all took part.

Younger coders could customize a game, adjusting settings and backgrounds, while older students could try making their own mobile app using JavaScript.

Incoming Laboratory Director Terry Wallace joined a sixth-grade class at Mountain Elementary in Los Alamos, stressing how computer coding is fundamental to modern scientific research. “Nobody does any science without code,” he says. “Nobody does weather forecasting without code, nobody monitors traffic on the roads without code.”

Incoming Laboratory Director Terry Wallace talks to sixth-grade students at Mountain Elementary in Los Alamos about the importance of computer coding.

Lab volunteer Heather Huynh enjoyed working with the children at Mountain Elementary. “Most of the kids at the schools I visited throughout the week were really good about answering the questions I asked and trying to think through it on their own which made me feel more like I was guiding them through the process as opposed to giving them the answer,” she says.

“I did a lot of computer science and STEM outreach in college, so I was really excited to hear that the Lab participates in Hour of Code. I wanted to get involved with it because I had an experience teaching computer science skills to middle school students remotely and that experience showed me the importance of being a mentor to others.”

The Hour of Code campaign, organized by nonprofit Code.org has engaged 10 percent of all students in the world. One of the aims of the campaign is to increase diversity in computer science by reaching students of all backgrounds in ways that inspire them to keep learning.

“The program means a lot to me since I learned coding at Los Alamos High School and continued with my Masters in Computer Science from the University of Oregon,” says Kurt Steinhaus, Superintendent of Los Alamos Public Schools. “I want to extend my

appreciation and thanks to Los Alamos National Laboratory for supporting both the Hour of Code and the Supercomputing Challenge. It has been a tremendous benefit to our teachers”.

“It’s important to show kids that programming is accessible and fun,” says Janelle Vigil-Maestas from the Laboratory’s Community Partnerships Office, who helped co-ordinate the Laboratory volunteers. “Being able to code can open up many careers, and allows children to be creators of technology, not just consumers of it.”

For additional information, visit the [Hour of Code website](#).

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