

# Camps engage children in math, science, computers

By Marsha Shoemaker

For 18 years SCSU has been hosting summer Math-Science-Computer Camps that pique the interest of elementary and middle school children in fields that traditionally have been underrepresented by people of color and women.

The program, hosted by the Department of Ethnic Studies and developed and directed by Robert C. Johnson, seeks diversity in ethnicity, gender, regional origin and socio-economic backgrounds among its participants. Students of color and girls are strongly encouraged to participate, although all students are welcome to attend.



Through creative and problem-solving activities and science projects carried out on a farm and other out-of-the-classroom environments, groups of students in third and fourth, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth grade divisions learn in innovative ways.

During the three-day program on the farm of Linda and John Peck, for example, camp participants are introduced to scientific experiments, organic gardening, edible wild plants, a horse ring, bat houses, wood sawing, and various animal life. Each student is exposed to such experiences as horseback riding, outhouses, and soil composition that are new to many urban campers.



Hands-on experiences in nature, in problem-solving, and in technology have helped hundreds of young people to discover their potential and their interest in exploring math, science and computer fields. The five-day residential camps also have given participants an opportunity to learn on the SCSU campus and to be exposed to the opportunity of higher education in their own futures.

"The benefits from this program carry over to their regular schooling and have long-term impacts," Johnson said. "And having a program of this nature has benefited SCSU in multiple ways."

"While it has been challenging, and sometimes very difficult to maintain this program for such a long period of time, it is extremely rewarding to see the young people derive so much pleasure, knowledge and experience from their involvement in the program," said Johnson.

Tuition fees of \$700 are subsidized for many children by program sponsors, which include SCSU, 3M, Federated Insurance Company, and Xcel Foundation. Families may only pay zero to \$150, depending on their income.

For high school students, SCSU hosts the Scientific Discovery Program and the Advanced Program in Technology and Science.