

City kids go high-tech camping

SCSU summer program mixes computers with variety of subjects

By Mike Nistler
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The Math-Science Computer Camp at St. Cloud State University last week blended a little bit of everything.

For sure, there was classroom work involving math and reading. There also was a fair amount of work on computers with students, many from the Twin Cities, doing hands-on activities with spread sheets and such.

But there also was ample opportunity for the students to literally get out into the field. The students traveled to different farms, as well as walking through rivers to see how the skills they use in the classroom are applicable in real-life research.

For instance, one day the students went to a Cold Spring-area farm to count and measure earthworms, which directly relate to the soil quality, said Hedy Tripp, the project coordinator.

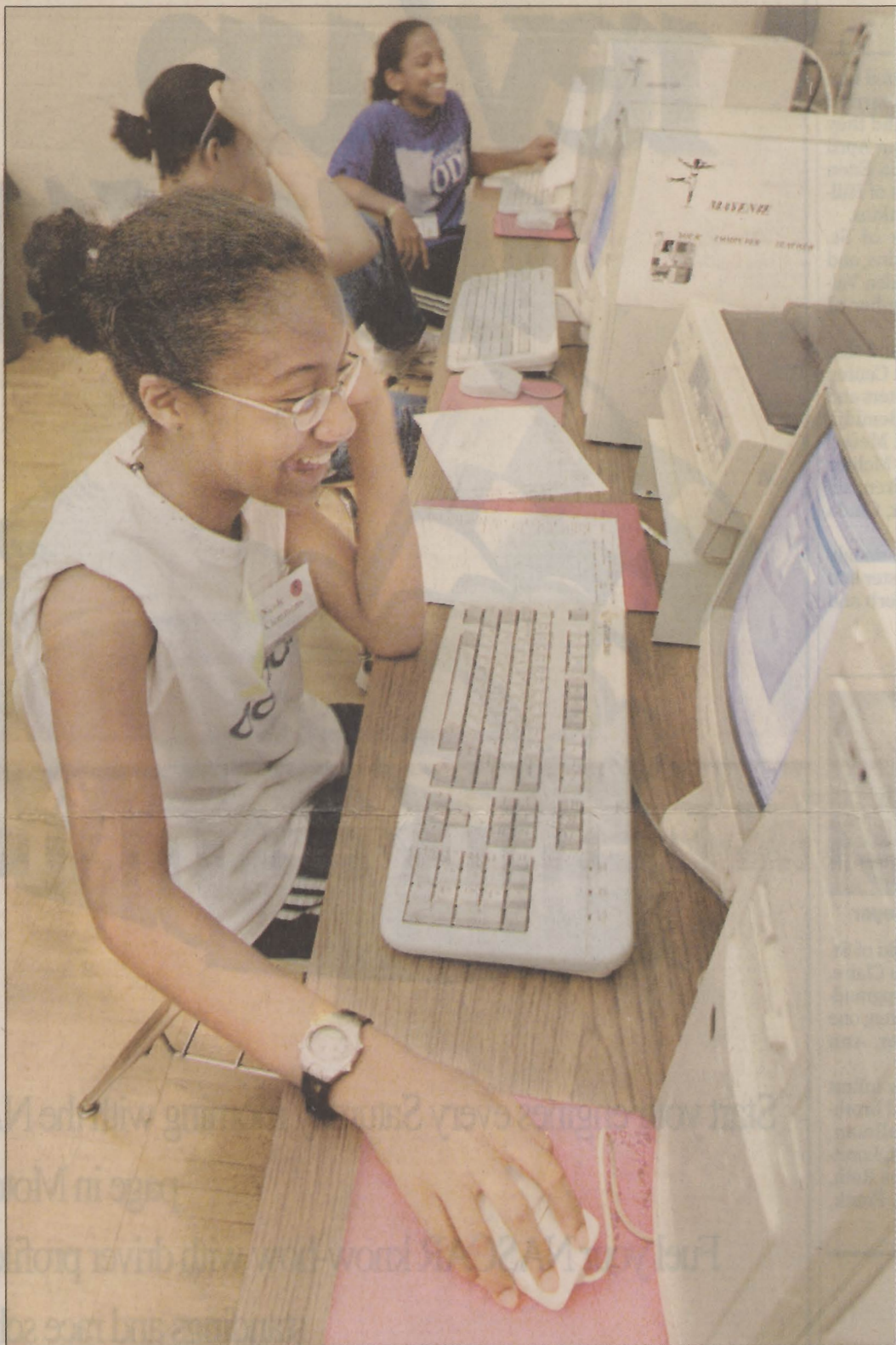
This is the 13th year of the math-science camp at St. Cloud State, said Robert C. Johnson, the camp's director.

"The main idea is to get the students involved in the joy of math, science and technology," Johnson said.

The five-day program is designed for students of color and girls. Many of the students come from the Twin Cities, Johnson said, and most have never set foot on a farm. That makes studying things such as plant life and agriculture in settings like dairy farms or mushroom farms unusual.

The students may never have stepped foot in a hayloft on a 90-degree day or seen manure used as a fertilizer, Johnson said.

Nicole Clemmons, 12, who will be an eighth-grader at Benilde St. Margaret in St. Louis Park this fall, was not only struck by the smells on a farm, but by the bugs as well.



TIMES PHOTOS BY MIKE KNAAK

Nicole Clemmons worked in the computer lab during St. Cloud State University's Math-Science Computer Camp. The

Benilde St. Margaret eighth-grader enjoyed her experience so much last year, she returned for a second summer.

The variety of activities makes time at the camp go fast, said Clemmons, who wants to use her math and science skills to someday, perhaps, become an interior decorator. This is the straight-A student's second time at the St. Cloud State camp. She said she enjoyed her experience so much last year that she wanted to come back again.

Likewise, Rafelle Jackson, 13, returned this year for a second go-around.

"I wanted to learn more about computers," said Jackson, as he did just that by working on a spreadsheet on a computer.

The camp has evolved during the 13 years of its existence, Johnson said, especially in the area of computers. Today students use digital cameras, e-mail and the Internet, which wasn't

available to them 13 years ago, Johnson said.

"They're exposed to the latest technology," he said.

The camp was the fifth such session held this summer at St. Cloud State. The earlier camps were for students as young as third-graders.

The sessions are sponsored by the Minority Studies Program at St. Cloud State. Funding is provided by the university as well as the Medtronic Foundation, Northern States Power Co., the St. Paul Companies Foundation and the 3M Research Foundation.

A variety of faculty and staff work with the students, keeping their minds on the task at hand as much as possible considering the vim and vigor of 45 young people working together in close quarters during a hot sum-

mer week.

One of those instructors, Fred Yiran, was helping students make bead necklaces and bracelets. The session, Yiran said, blended several lessons including everything from art and math to cultural and behavioral.

"These students act differently depending on the activity that they are involved in," Yiran said, explaining that the students' behavior in his art class is greatly different than their demeanor in a computer class or on a field trip.

Today, a five-week camp called the Scientific Discovery Program begins at St. Cloud State. It is a special program for high-ability, high-potential ninth- and 10th-graders who have a strong interest in math and science.



Computer instructor Sharon McDonald helped 13-year-old Rafelle Jackson get his computer going.