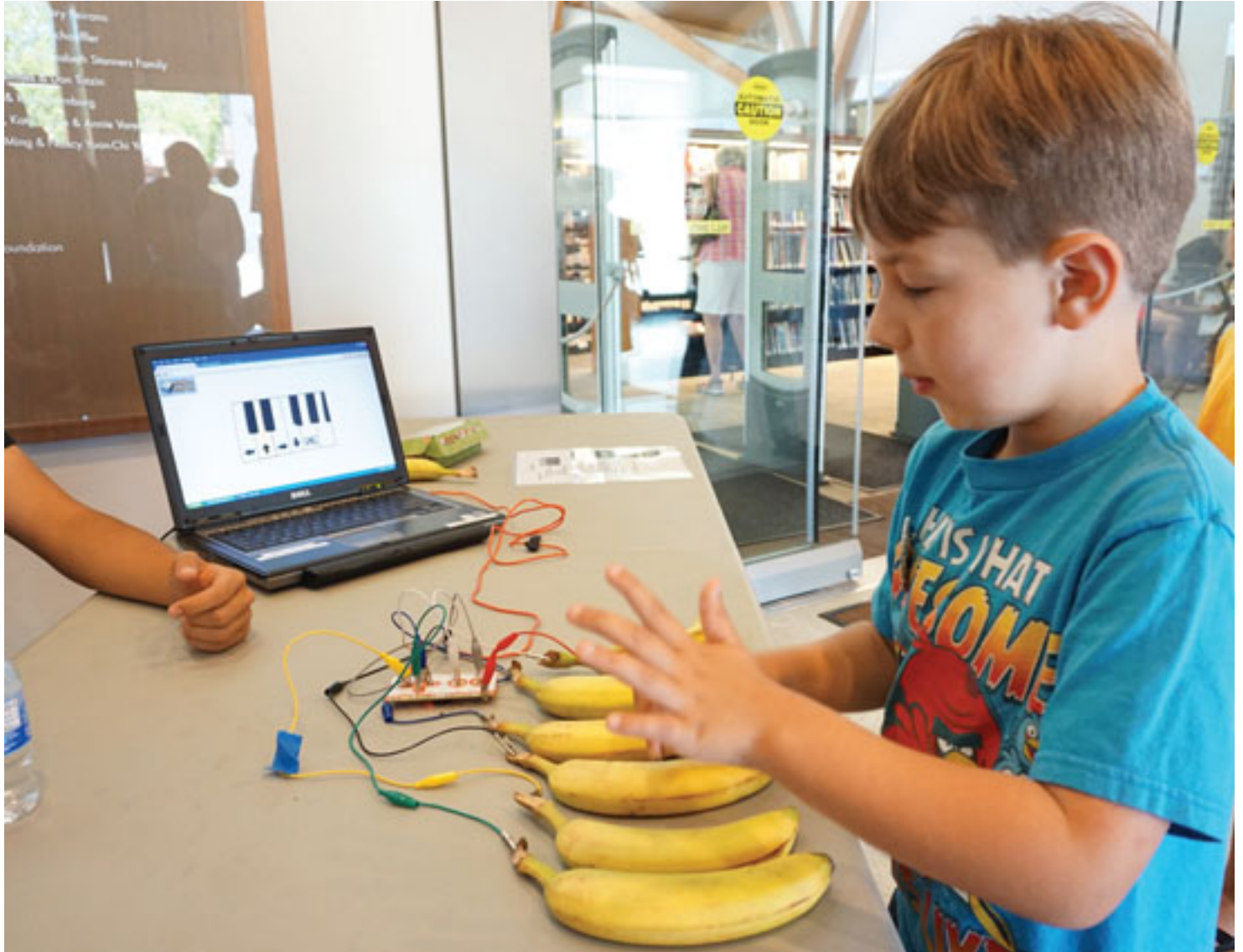


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## It's Full STEAM Ahead at Lafayette Library's MakerFest

By Cathy Dausman



A young musician tries his hand at musical bananas. Photos Cathy Dausman

What to make of the MakerFest at Lafayette Library and Learning Center? How about rockets and roller coasters, buttons and musical instruments - guitars, gourds, maracas, musical bananas; candy sushi, beeswax lip balm, slime, green screen photography and 3D printed objects.

LLLC packed five hours' worth of fun into 30 booths during their third annual MakerFest July 30. The event put the wraps on the county libraries' Year of S.T.E.A.M. theme, and it was a fitting blend indeed of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

MakerFest began three years ago when Emily Koster challenged fellow librarian Orlando Guzman to develop a kind of family street festival. Their MakerFest idea was presented at a Contra Costa libraries meeting earlier this year.

"This is a really big event for our community," said executive director Beth Needel. Many attendees were initially drawn to the library plaza rocket launch, where they could send handmade paper rockets soaring several stories high using compressed air from a bicycle hand pump. Most rockets touched down safely; a few landed on the library roof.

The science of roller coaster physics may have eluded some of the younger visitors, but their delight watching marbles perform loop-de-loops along lengths of pipe insulation was clearly evident. Nearby, a table of volunteers helped children and their enthusiastic parents to fill plastic eggshells with beans. Attach a spoon handle and you've made a maraca. Shoebox guitars with rubber band strings were being assembled at another booth.

In the conference room, children were encouraged to mind their own beeswax, watching it melt, before combining it with a bit of olive oil and the scent and color of their choice to make lip balm. Chocolate mint was the overwhelming flavor favorite. There was also slime to be made from detergent, water and glue. Less appealing perhaps, but equally fun.

While adults may have been drawn to the library's painstakingly hand-built 3-D printer which busily etched a plastic gear destined as a part for another 3-D printer children and parents alike flocked to a button making table where recycled magazine pictures turned into wearable art.

Visitors stepping into the library proper could play musical bananas or be digitally photographed on a variety of whimsical settings thanks to the magic of green screen technology.

MakerFest was supported this year by Lafayette Partners in Education, but Guzman hopes to expand the partnerships, mentioning Sustainable Lafayette and Lafayette Community Garden as possible sponsors. Thanks to more than 60 library volunteers and staff, an estimated 800 attendees enjoyed the 2016 S.T.E.A.M. MakerFest, where science, technology, engineering, arts and math blended into weekend fun.

"It always surpasses our expectations," Guzman said.

LLLC offers additional community-wide events, including Dogtown Downtown in the spring, as key pieces of their approximately 1,100 programs offered year-round. For details visit <http://www.lafayettelib.org>.



Decorating musical gourds was part of the fun at the MakerFest.

Reach the reporter at: [cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com)

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