

NASA Astronaut and Osage grad visits local schools

Osage Middle School welcomed a rare and distinguished visitor when NASA Astronaut Michael Hopkins visited on Friday, March 27.

Colonel Hopkins, a 1987 graduate of School of the Osage, spent his professional life serving for the United States Air Force prior to being selected to NASA's 20th astronaut class in July 2009.

Hopkins returned to School of the Osage as the lead presenter at the OMS Science Day.

On Sept. 25, 2013, Hopkins joined two Russian cosmonauts in flight to the International Space Station where he orbited for 166 days before returning to Earth on March 10, 2014. He continues to serve at the Johnson Space Center in Houston where he lives with his wife, Julie, and two sons.

The previous day Hopkins visited the Camdenton 4-H **FIRST**[®] LASER Robotics Team, March 26, to discuss their futures, and how they can achieve them.

In an informal setting, Hopkins sat down with the students of the Robotics team to chat about what it means to be an astronaut, and how they can achieve their own personal goals. While explaining how and why this was important, Hopkins stated "Robotics is a very powerful tool, especially when combined with human exploration.

He discussed a variety of topics, from what it takes to be an astronaut, to how physics work while in space. The students asked questions on these topics, and Hopkins responded in great detail.

Hopkins told the students that the things learned in high school will be very important later in life, and if he could go back he would do more hands-on work with the material he learned from his school books.

He explained how his interest in space started in high school when he saw shuttle launches on TV. From that point on, his goal was to be an astronaut. After high school, he went to the University of Illinois, graduating with an aerospace engineering degree. From there he continued on to Stanford, earning his masters.

Senior Ambria Knox questioned Hopkins about going to NASA from the military, because she intends to enlist shortly after graduation. He explained the various options, and urged her to follow her chosen path. When asked what she learned, she replied "No matter where you're from, you can be what you want with dedication and motivation."

This was a theme that Hopkins maintained throughout the discussion, doing his best to impart that wisdom to the students. Sophomore Brenden Barbour has been with the club for seven years, and he

hopes to get a degree in computer science or aerospace engineering. When asked what he learned, he responded with "If you have something you want to do, pursue it."

Hopkins urged the students to follow their dreams. "There's a similarity between what you learn in class and what we use at NASA." he said. "You have to do what you love, try everything, and don't be afraid of mistakes."