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Camdenton robotics students visit Blunt, McCaskill while in DC for advocacy tips



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Dr. Julie Dill, assistant superintendent for Camdenton School District, and Sherry Comer, director of the robotics program, accompanied three young ladies to the nation's capital to take part in advocacy training through "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology" (FIRST).

The three students were chosen after writing essays that were scored by faculty members, explaining how they planned to use the information and training back in their home state. Dill said the Camdenton group was the only ones from Missouri out of more than 200 students from around the country selected to take part.

"They were working on gaining information and skills to go to our four representatives from Missouri and talk to them about FIRST Robotics, STEM education, and ultimately the after-school program," Dill said. "The students now want to do an advocacy day for Missouri for Missouri representatives and senators to get that movement going back home. They're fired up and ready to go back to DC."

STEM is a curriculum based on science, technology, engineering and mathematics in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.

While touring Capital Hill, the group arranged meetings with U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Missouri), U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Missouri), U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Missouri) and U.S. Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Missouri). They also had several advocacy training seminars designed to increase awareness for their causes and how to contact lawmakers.

“It was a great experience and we really felt like we had two wins that day,” Dill said. “One of them was Senator Blunt had never really come out in full support of the after-school program, and he did that day. He had never done that for the 21st century after-school program. Claire McCaskill was very fired up about all the support she could give to the FIRST Robotics and after-school program.”

Blunt even mentioned the FIRST Robotics club in a press conference the following day, and McCaskill followed with a statement of support as well.

“The incredible passion and talent of Missouri students gives me great hope for the future,” McCaskill said. “I’m glad to see so many young Missourians getting involved in programs like FIRST that emphasize the importance of science and technology, and I’m confident these kids have a bright future.”