

The call of the (cyber) wild

Group creates bilingual Web site on lions

By Deborah Eisner
STAFF WRITER

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my! Actually, it was all about lions at the High Point Village ScienceQuest celebration Thursday, Aug. 23, in Roslindale.

The closing ceremonies for the program, which taught kids about science and technology, were held last Thursday afternoon to celebrate the launch of the group's bilingual Web site about lions.

ScienceQuest is a three-year project funded by the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C., and administered locally through the Educational Development Center in Newton. This year was the pilot program, with six ScienceQuest teams throughout the Boston metropolitan area. All six programs were based in the subsidized housing complex's computer center.

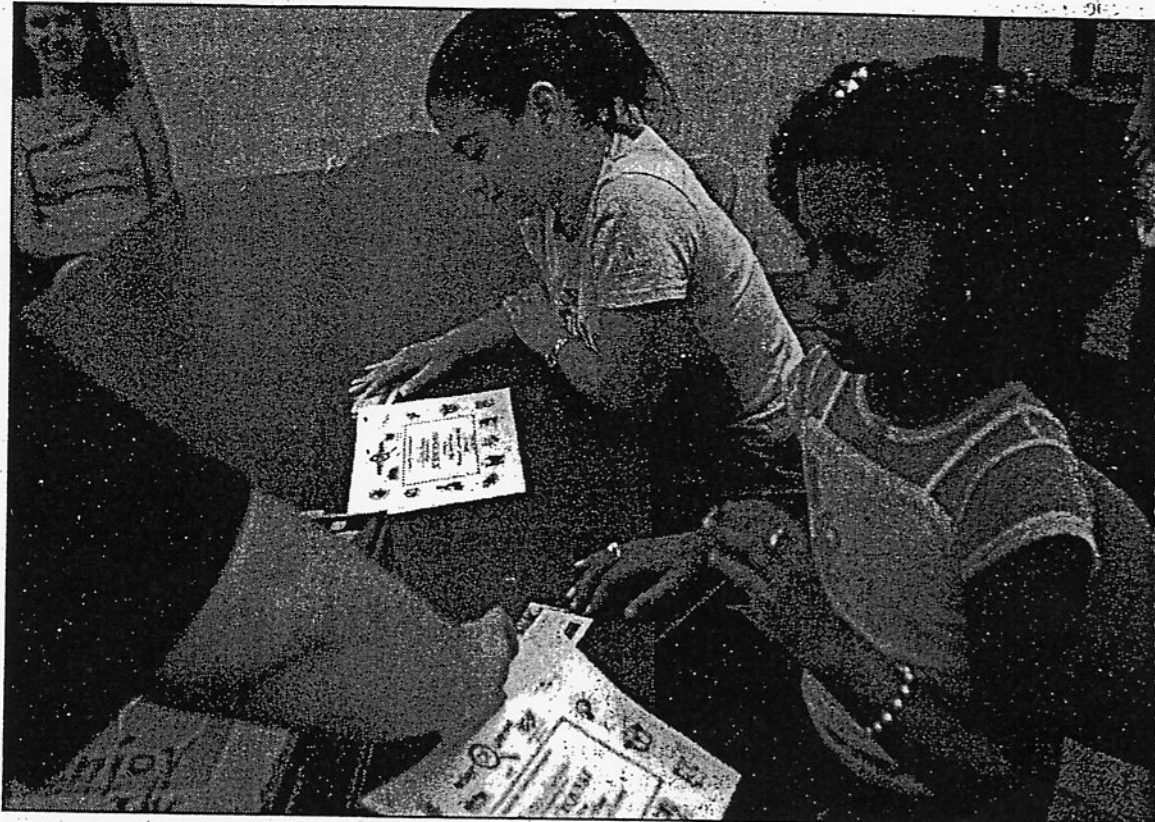
"The goal of the project is to get kids excited about science, and especially the science that's all around us," said Project Director Jennifer Dorsen. "Everybody is curious. We were hoping to tap in to that curiosity."

As a result of the National Science Foundation's partnership with Neighborhood Networks, an initiative by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the ScienceQuest programs worked in collaboration with subsidized housing developments. Neighborhood Networks brings small technology access labs to their housing projects, and Dorsen said it seemed like the perfect fit to bring this program to those same technology labs.

The Roslindale team chose to focus on lions after a visit to the Franklin Park Zoo piqued one girl's interest in the animal. The Web site includes a fact sheet, two fables about lions, information on the conservation of the lions' natural habitat and drawings of lions that the kids did while at the zoo.

Belgianny Gurreo, 9, said he enjoyed learning about the lions. His favorite fact, he said, was that a lion's roar can be heard five miles away.

The team from High Point Village,



Marie Harb, 16 (left) and Barbara Figueroa, 11, receive their ScienceQuest certificates for creating a pair of Web sites on lions. STAFF PHOTO BY REY BANGON

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located off Washington Street in Roslindale, fluctuated in size, with kids dropping out of and joining the group throughout the course of the five-month project. The final team consisted of two elementary school students, two high school students who acted as assistant coaches and two adult coaches. The Roslindale team was the only team to involve high school students in the program.

Dana Weber, lab administrator and technology instructor for the High Point Village Computer Learning Center, said having the assistant coaches improved the program's success. "It was awesome because it layered out," she said.

Marie Harb, 16, one of the assistant coaches, said she thought the program was a success. "I think it's a really good idea because it brought us together. We learned from each other," she said.

Another unique feature of the High Point Village team was that team members decided to build two Web sites—one in English and one in Spanish. All four members of the team speak some Spanish, so the decision came naturally, Harb said.

Harb said that Barbara "Barbie" Figueroa, 11, is the best Spanish speaker in the group and therefore helped a lot with the translation.

Figueroa, who was the only participant to stay with the project from beginning to end, said she would do an

other ScienceQuest program again, if she had the chance. "It was interesting. It's fun," she said.

Before the team selected a final project, they performed simple science experiments to learn about the science that exists all around them.

"The really important part of this was that this was a really exciting project. [It's good] to see kids get excited about science and technology because they're interested, not because it was an assignment for school," Dorsen said.

The High Point Village ScienceQuest Web site is <http://library.thinkquest.org/SQ0110120/>

Deborah Eisner can be reached at deisner@cnc.com.

Nest Roxbury(MA)
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