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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

STARBASE Rapid City graduates its 300th academy

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs

RAPID CITY, S.D. – STARBASE Rapid City graduated its 300th academy Thursday, Oct. 6, at the South Dakota National Guard’s Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid.

STARBASE, a program for youth ages six through 18, is aimed at improving math and science skills. The program starts at the elementary school level in order to attract and prepare students at an early age for careers in engineering and other science-related fields of study.

The graduation marks a momentous achievement in the local program, which has educated approximately 7,000 Rapid City and surrounding area youth since 2002 in challenging hands-on activities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Class sizes average around 24 students with the Rapid City based STARBASE programs teaching 36 academies each school year.

The program principally exposes at-risk children and their teachers to real world applications of math and science, through experiential learning, simulations, and experiments in aviation and space-related fields.

STARBASE serves students and teachers by providing exciting hands-on learning experiences combining personal development, teambuilding and enrichment in science, math, and technology. The vision is to teach students the strategies needed to achieve their dreams and become responsible members of society.

Program experiences include shooting straw rockets, which teach children about force, angle and velocity, hands-on activities in chemistry, molecules, physical and chemical reaction, and computer-aided drafting using the same software that companies such as Dell, Harley Davidson and Caterpillar use, said Sarah Jensen, local STARBASE director.

STARBASE also addresses drug use prevention, health, self-esteem and life skills within a math- and science-based program.

“There were so many opportunities for kids,” said Alexa Kuske, a fifth-grader at Robbinsdale Elementary. “We got to do so many hands-on projects. It was so enjoyable. We got to do a lot that so many schools don’t get to do.”

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Support systems and extended-care networks are provided for students as the program tracks their improvement in the curriculum areas. Parents are encouraged to become positively involved in their children's learning process.

Hope Patrick, of Rapid City, said she has seen "a new spark" in her daughter, Raina Grace, a fifth-grader at Robbinsdale Elementary.

"She didn't want anything to do with science before," said Hope. "Now she comes home excited, telling me about all of these wonderful things she's doing, just really wanting to explore more. It's just a wonderful thing."

STARBASE is a premier Department of Defense educational program sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, where students interact with military personnel to explore careers and observe STEM applications in a real-world environment. The program provides students with 20-25 hours of stimulating experiences at National Guard, Navy, Marine, Air Force Reserve and Air Force bases across the nation.

Brig. Gen. Jeff Marlette, South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) assistant adjutant general, was the graduating academies guest speaker and spoke to the graduates about making positive choices.

"Life is about making decisions," Marlette told the graduating students. "The decisions you make right now, even at 10 and 11 years old, are going to make a difference in your life - for the rest of your life."

Marlette congratulated the students on the positive decisions they've made and on the success as being the 300th graduating STARBASE academy before presenting each student with a graduation certificate, a STARBASE t-shirt, military-style ID tags and a medal.

Jensen, who also serves in the SDARNG, as an administrative officer in the 881st Troop Command in Sturgis, said one of the most positive benefits of STARBASE is hands-on, minds-on learning.

"They get hands-on, experimental learning without the stress of a test," Jensen said. "We also get the opportunity to teamwork with the school districts in reaching their academic goals."

STARBASE South Dakota has four locations throughout the state: STARBASE Rapid City, STARBASE Sioux Falls, and two Native American/Rural Outreach mobile programs STARBASE NOVA (New Opportunities, Visions, and Attitudes) Honor, and STARBASE NOVA Courage.

The South Dakota STARBASE program relies heavily on community support for its success, and is also a member of local chambers of commerce for further program integration into local communities.

Alexa Kuske summed up STARBASE saying, "It is so fun. After this experience I really want to be a scientist."



111006-A-FO377-051 Sarah Jensen (left), STARBASE Rapid City director, congratulates Brandon Huether, a fifth-grader at Rapid City's Robbinsdale Elementary and STARBASE Rapid City graduate, Thursday, Sept. 6, at Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. STARBASE Rapid City, a program aimed at improving math and science skills for youth ages 6 through 18, held the graduation ceremony for its 300th academy. (SDNG photo by 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson) (RELEASED)



111006-A-FO377-007 Brig. Gen. Jeff Marlette, South Dakota Army National Guard assistant adjutant general, speaks to fifth-grade students from Rapid City's Robbinsdale Elementary at STARBASE Rapid City's graduation ceremony, Thursday, Sept. 6, at Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. STARBASE Rapid City, a program aimed at improving math and science skills for youth ages 6 through 18, held the graduation ceremony for its 300th academy. (SDNG photo by 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson) (RELEASED)

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