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Developing Skills and Realizing Potential

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Developing Skills and Realizing Potential

The positive, nurturing influence of SciFEST, ArtFEST and Music Festival

Clarissa Carbungco

By Hannah Gallant Once every year, Andrews University hosts SciFEST, ArtFEST and Music Festival. Each festival is a specialized opportunity for Adventist academy students and others to experience an immersive, educational weekend with multiple opportunities for enrichment and growth.

The festivals are set up in a way that allows attendees to have a full university experience while also learning more about their areas of interest. These festivals are geared toward anyone of high school age who has the appropriate parental permission, sponsors and school permission. Many students who attend a festival also are eligible for future scholarships upon attending Andrews University and pursuing a related degree.

In order to streamline transportation for the surrounding academies, SciFEST and ArtFEST are typically held simultaneously each year. In 2017, both were held from September 21–23, while Music Festival was held from March 1–4. All of the festivals have different types of workshops, activities, masterclasses, performances,

labs and games that allow attendees to be exposed to a wide variety of skills and knowledge in the field.

The theme of the 2017 SciFEST was cells. Each STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) department planned according to this theme so the students could experience a wide array of activities. In biology, the students looked at plant cells. Agriculture and animal science focused on bees and honey cells. Physics educated the students about fuel cells, while mathematics implemented breakout problems around a jail cell. All of these scenarios provided a unique, hands-on learning experience for the students who attended. “Our goal is to inspire high school students to study one of the STEM fields, but it’s also to share with them the connection



Clarissa Carburgco



Heldi Ramirez

“While Music Festival is rigorous and tiring at times, it is one of the most memorable experiences you could have.”

between being a Christian and being a scientist,” says Monica Nudd, Andrews University STEM enrollment coordinator. “Many times, in our society, it’s one or the other. At Andrews, we show that you can be both a Bible-believing Christian as well as a good scientist.”

In the five years since its beginning, SciFEST has enriched the lives of attending students as well as inspired them to consider degrees and careers in the STEM fields. Kara Shephard, a current senior at Indiana Academy, shares her experience of attending the 2017 SciFEST. “Before attending SciFEST, I had been considering going into physics; SciFEST helped establish that choice. While at SciFEST, I had the opportunity to observe Saturn and the Sun through the observatory. Seeing them up close was my favorite part of the trip and helped make me want to study astronomy and astrophysics even more.”

ArtFEST 2017 attendees worked under the theme, Building Blocks. Students had the opportunity to explore photography, ceramics, graphic design, documentary film and more. The weekend culminated in a gallery exhibition of the finished work. Paul Kim, chair of the

Department of Visual Art, Communication & Design, and professor of Documentary Film & Communication, shares his observation that art education is a need in the lives of most academy students. Due to the large amount of time most students spend with visual art, media and digital technologies, he says, “It’s essential that we educate our students to become more critically informed consumers and viewers in this space, as the alternative is to fail miserably in teaching them how to thoughtfully engage with culture.”

Kim also has seen numerous students choose career paths that do not suit them — this is often due to their lack of knowledge about viable career opportunities in the creative arts field. “The most rewarding part of my job is encountering that lost student and seeing the amazing transformation and sense of fulfillment as they realize that they are in the perfect place for them, with the right mentors to help guide them into a promising future.”

David Sherwin, assistant professor of Photography, echoes Kim’s sentiments. Four years ago, he helped



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establish ArtFEST as “something that would show the students they had an alternative to traditional career paths.” ArtFEST takes a practical approach to this by focusing on skills, such as photography and yearbook design, used frequently by academy students. In this way, students are not only exposed to new skills but are also better equipped to actually practice and develop these skills beyond ArtFEST. So far, this approach is working. Sherwin describes one 2017 ArtFEST attendee who did not know that she could obtain a degree in photography and actually make a living. Attending ArtFEST helped her realize this possibility, and currently the student is attending Andrews University and doing well.

In addition to SciFEST and ArtFEST, Andrews University holds the annual Music Festival. This festival has a long history. It began in the 1950s as a recruitment event to celebrate the ongoing music programs at constituent academies. It was created as a general music festival for band, choir and orchestra, which continues today. Consequently, the 2017 Music Festival focused on band and keyboard, while the 2018 theme is choir and orchestra. With a mixture of master classes, side-by-side rehearsals with select Andrews music majors and a final concert, Music Festival effectively helps students develop their skills. “The high-level performing experiences positively strengthen the mission and focus of music programs at the academies,” says Stephen Zork, professor of Music and conductor of the Andrews University Singers. “It teaches students the importance of creative expression, discovery and mastery, within the context of submission and vulnerability.”

Music Festival has a lasting impact on the students. Justin Johnson, who plays alto saxophone, attended the 2017 Music Festival as a senior at Andrews Academy. Now he is a sophomore medical laboratory science major at Andrews University and a member of the Andrews University Wind Symphony. He said, “While Music Festival is rigorous and tiring at times, it is one of the most memorable experiences you could have. You meet a lot of people who share the same goals and interests

as you, you attend master classes that broaden your musical horizons and, best of all, you play fun music for a weekend.”

SciFEST, ArtFEST and Music Festival each play an important role in providing a meaningful, hands-on educational experience for attendees. Exposure to the various departments helps students recognize their potential in STEM, art and music fields. Ultimately, the goal is to help each attendee find their passion and skills while they interact with university professors and fellow students in the midst of a Christ-centered atmosphere.

For more information about SciFEST, email stem-connect@andrews.edu or visit andrews.edu/cas/stem/scifest/. To receive information about ArtFEST, email visartndes@andrews.edu or call 269-471-6314. To learn more about Music Festival, email music@andrews.edu or visit andrews.edu/cas/music/musicfestival/. ■

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