

“Circus of Little Experiments”

An outreach project conducted by SPS members of the University of North Alabama
During Spring 2005

Marsh White Award

Final Report

Submitted June 1, 2005

As outlined in our proposal to the Marsh White Award Committee, SPS students from the University of North Alabama planned to visit fourth-grade classes in local elementary schools during spring 2005. These visits are intended to develop interest in physics at a very young age.

During each school visit, each SPS member created a station where a group of five or six students performed an experiment built from common household items. Each student group finished the experiment in about fifteen minutes, after which, that group would rotate to another station. For all school visits, five experimental stations were set up. The nature of these experiments has been discussed in our proposal to the Marsh White Award Committee.

A list of schools visited is presented at the end of this report. The total number of students learning from the project is 208. After the first school visit, a newspaper article spread the word of our project. By the next day, we were booked for the rest of the semester.

During each experimental presentation, the kids were able to be very involved, which resulted in a concentrated audience. The results of each presentation often resulted in open mouths and big eyes. Several kids called the presentations the “best day in their life” and other kids just called the physics “magic. The SPS members also found the presentations worthwhile, meeting with a huge variety of kids, and learning and improving their pedagogical methods. Besides the very positive feedback from the newspaper, each school came up with a scheme where kids would draw or write about their experience. Our engagement with a home-school group was also very interesting because we were able to show the parents of those children how to get them interested in science.

All in all, the response from the community was overwhelming. The SPS members made a scrapbook of this response. They decided to use some of the money from Marsh White Award, and some money from the organization funds, to make copies of this scrapbook. Six copies were sent to the Blake Lilly Prize Committee, and each SPS participant received a copy. A copy of the scrapbook is also included with this report.

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Expense Report

Amount of award: \$288.50

Items purchased	cost
batteries	40.00
magnets	80.00
brochures	22.00
posters and crayons	7.00
copper wire	6.00
insulated copper wire	17.00
plastic cups and bowls	3.00
nails and needles	5.00
scissors	7.00
tape	2.00
paper clips	5.00
balloons	24.00
scrapbook printing	78.00
Total cost	296.00

**List of schools visited by the SPS students to conduct the
“Circus of Little Experiments”**

Date of visit (all in 2005)	Elementary School (all in Florence, AL)	4 th grade teacher (or contact person)	Number of students
March 2	St. Joseph	Debbie Watkins 766-1923	20
March 9	Riverhill	Donna McAlpin 764-8200	24
March 23	Calvary Church (homeschoolers assn)	Rebecca Barry 768-0513	14
April 13	Forest Hills	Julie Wilson 768-2500	60
April 27 & May 4	Harlan	Debra Glass 768-2700	90
		Total students	208

This list represents all but one of the elementary schools in the city of Florence Alabama, including both private and public schools, including a Title 1 school. We estimate the total number of students served represents 3/4 of all 4th grade students in Florence, Alabama. Note also that the money spent of this outreach project represents a cost of less than \$1.50 per student.