



STEM students and their parents participated in the graduation ceremony at Sims Middle School.

# STEM summer camp holds graduation ceremony

By MACY PETTY

On Thursday July 29, the STEM summer camp held a graduation ceremony at Sims Middle School. This program was a collaboration between Union County Schools and the Upstate Workforce Board to help get students interested in STEM careers while also teaching them about workforce skills like leadership and teamwork. During the ceremony, the students demonstrated their projects - robots that they had built and programmed over the past three weeks - to their parents and the sponsors of the camp. The ceremony also featured a video presentation with photos from all the activities and field trips in which the students participated.

Over the course of the three-week camp, the students took several field trips in which they saw STEM ideas at work in local industries. They toured Union County Airport with Ronnie Wade and Union County Supervisor Frank Hart and saw a drone demonstration there by officers from the Union County Sheriff's

Office. They got an up-close look at fire trucks while visiting the Carlisle Fire Department. They also took a trip to Union's farmers market, where Elise Ashby from the Robin Hood Group spoke to them about the importance of STEM innovation in farming before they shopped for produce with the vendors gathered there. The highlight of this trip was tasting Ms. Ashby's own innovation - vegetable flavored ice cream made from tomatoes and cantaloupe. They visited CSL Plasma and Kemper Corporation to see their manufacturing process and got a look at the role of technology in medicine at Union Medical Center. The students also took campus tours of Spartanburg Community College and USC Union, and even traveled all the way to Charleston to see the science behind the animal exhibits at the Charleston Aquarium.

The camp also featured several guest speakers in addition to working on their projects. Nikki Burgess from SC Works gave the opening presentation on transfer-

able skills; Dana Wood from the Upstate Workforce Board lead the students in a manufacturing simulation, and Raven Miller from the Union County Library came to speak about STEM Literacy. Nikiya Shaw from Upstate Workforce Board, who was an organizer for the camp, led the students in a bracelet making activity. Their final speaker was motivational speaker Brooks Harper, author of the book 7 Skills to Make Mills, who spoke to the students about setting and achieving goals.

After their robot demonstration, there was a small award ceremony for the graduating students, with each receiving a certificate for completing the program. There were also specialized awards. Landon Zakalowski, Joslynn Rufrano, Maryah Farr, Aliviah Rainwater, Jayden Ramos-Perez, Breana Brannon and Treveon Shorter were recognized for having perfect attendance. Malachi Rice received the Team Player Award, Aliviah Rainwater received the Leadership Award, Jayden Ramos-Perez received the Citizenship

Award, and Landon Zakalowski received the Pacesetter Award. The students then each shared their favorite experiences from the camp and expressed their gratitude for their teachers in the program. Annette Lyles and Shanae Robbs.

The sponsors for the program were Union County, Upstate Workforce Board, Union County School District, Town of Carlisle, Union Medical Center, Union County Library System, Santic Precision, SC Works Greater Upstate, SC Department of Commerce, Broad River Electric Cooperative, CSL Plasma, SCC Union, USC Union, RobinHood Group, Upstate Workforce Futures Corporation, Kemper Corporation, and the Urban League of the Upstate.

Participating students were Breana Brannon, Maryah Farr, Landon Johnson, Jacob Moore, Aracely Morales, Jayden Ramos - Perez, Alivia Rainwater, Malachi Rice, Makenzi Risher, Joslynn Rufrano, Reid Sanders, AJ Shaw, Treveon Shorter, Olivia Worthy and Landon Zakalowski.