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One Teacher Makes A Difference

When RADM Frederick L. Lewis USN (Ret), President of the National Training and Simulation Association (NTSA), met with the I/ITSEC 2010 "America's Teachers" participants just a year ago this week, he challenged them to go back and "make a difference."

Clear evidence that his message was taken to heart can be seen on the exhibit floor in the form of six visiting high school students from the Tri-Village Local School District in New Madison, OH. The students are accompanied by Kim Puckett, a 2010 "America's Teachers" recipient who joined her students in paying their own way to this year's event.



(l to r) Macy Faylick, Craig Harisson, Justin Royer, Kim Puckett, Clayton Murphy, Seth Thomas. Not shown, Kaleb Chowning, who was off in a nearby simulator. Photo by Scott Rekdal.

"I came last year not really knowing what to expect and a little hesitant to leave my classroom," she told the *ShowDaily*. "But when I got here it was an amazing experience. They taught us all about modeling and simulation. They showed us how it's used and what the future looks like. It was overwhelming. And at one of those events they have for 'America's Teachers' we had a sit down with Admiral Lewis, who said, 'I'd like you to go make a difference. I'd like you to change something.'"

"In education, we frequently say that we are trying to prepare students for a future that we don't understand or for jobs that

don't exist yet," she said. "But at I/ITSEC it hit me: They do exist. They're right here. This is going to go on. Students may not teach the way we currently teach, but they are going to be training or trained on some virtual system almost no matter what they do."

Puckett returned to Ohio with a new appreciation for modeling and simulation. With a fortuitous location near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Puckett worked with the support of Col Jack Franz, Wink Bennett and Bruce Preiss, along with the Gaming Research Integration and Learning Laboratory (GRILL), to write a modeling and simulation curriculum through the Dayton Regional STEM Center.

The students' capstone project involved taking a gaming engine and developing a fire evacuation for a school (on display in USAF Booth 1533).

"They were able to do it," Puckett said. "They created fire. They used artificial intelligence. They created 3D modeling for chairs and desks and imported them in, adding textures and physics."

"Without any real knowledge we wanted to see how we would fare in creating a school, simulating a fire, and then evacuating NPCs – non-playable characters – throughout the school," noted Craig Harrison, one of the students involved in the project. "That was our general task and however we needed to accomplish it, we accomplished it. And it was really fun to do."

Harrison is one of six of the students involved with the curriculum who were able to pay their way to this year's I/ITSEC.

Offering his initial impressions of the exhibit hall, he added, "Over the summer the world of modeling and simulation was opened up for me, but here it's just amazing."

Puckett summarized, "I just think that the right people happened to be in the right places with the right motivation to give students opportunities with the right goals. I'm just a piece of the puzzle. But the end result is that students in the Dayton area are getting this incredible opportunity to learn about modeling and simulation in a way that is really engaging and current, with experts who come out to the classroom to support and assist. It's awesome."