

HBKIDS PARTNERS WITH THE STREAM MACHINE



STREAM team member Emily Mack reads aloud to children.

Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math.”

High on the list that summer Monday morning at the Erie County Public Library in Fairview was science. For one activity, armed with miniature magnifying glasses, the kids examined insects entombed in resin; for another, they had to guess whether a card pictured an insect or some other creature.



STREAM Machine team members Kathy Walters and Emily Mack set up their tent outside the Erie County Public Library in Fairview.

The 20 children who recently discovered the three elements all insects have in common also discovered that WQLN’s STREAM Machine is a pretty cool thing.

Operated by the STREAM team of Kathy Walters and Emily Mack, the Machine is an expanded Ford van chockfull of clips from PBS Kids shows, games like Wild Kratts, read-along books, and STREAM kits with all sorts of goodies inside.

But first of all, what does STREAM stand for? The kids would say, “That’s easy. It stands for Science, Technology,



An image of the STREAM Machine.

“Insect or not? Insect or not?” Mack challenged the kids, who got most of them correct, even the spider.

The STREAM Machine began life in 2022 in the recently ended pandemic period. It was a fraught time when a frustrated Walters wondered what could she and WQLN could do to reach children again. Her answer: Create outdoor classrooms where kids can be safe yet still learn and have fun.

“Everything is keyed to a model of instruction called the PBS ready-to-learn learning triangle,” Walters said. “It means ‘View. Read. Do.’”

The program is aimed at children aged 4-8, and in this fiscal year just ended, it served 2,300 children and gave away 4,100 books, many of which are purchased through a \$5,000 grant from Hooked on Books for Kids.

What’s left of the July schedule includes visits to the Blasco Library on July 30 at 10 a.m. for pre-K to grade 2 and to the Corry Library on July 23 at 1:30 p.m. for K-2.

Future plans for the STREAM Machine include making a few wintertime visits inside the classroom.

“We might ramp up to do a couple here and there,” said Walters.

But for now, the Machine is plenty busy for July and August. With plenty of ideas for kids.

“Maybe a few too many ideas,” admitted Mack.

(Oh, yeah. The three things all insects have in common are a hard, external skeleton; three main body parts; and six legs. And as you might expect, a spider is not an insect. As the kids would insist, “Too many legs!”)

- Doug Rieder