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Technological Petting Zoo
succeeds in Bronson;
Final version set for tomorrow (March 17) in Williston Inventor Convention March 12-April 14

Levy County Library System Youth Services-IT Manager Jenny Rodgers shows how the Surface Pro Tablet is a laptop computer and then it easily disconnects to be a tablet.

Story, Photos and Videos
By Jeff M. Hardison © March 16, 2018 @ at 2:08 a.m.

   BRONSON -- Levy County Library System Youth Services-IT Manager Jenny Rodgers and Youth Services Assistant Jennifer Becker completed the fourth of five sets of computer classes and "Technological Petting Zoos" at the Bronson Public Library on Thursday evening (March 14).

In this photo, a small robot model made by a 3-D printer is at the left. Next to it are a partially-completed Rhinoceros and a completed rhino.

This photo shows the size of the small robot model when placed next to a normal electric outlet.

The final chance for this set of fun and learning is tomorrow (Saturday, March 17) at Williston Public Library, 10 S.E. First St., Williston. The Computer Class is at 2 p.m. and the Technology Petting Zoo is at 3 p.m.

The first part of the event on each day is an introduction to computers, and that is followed by "Technology Petting Zoos."

The sessions for computer classes are great for people of any age, Rodgers said. Participants will learn basic computer terms, and methods for basic computer safety.
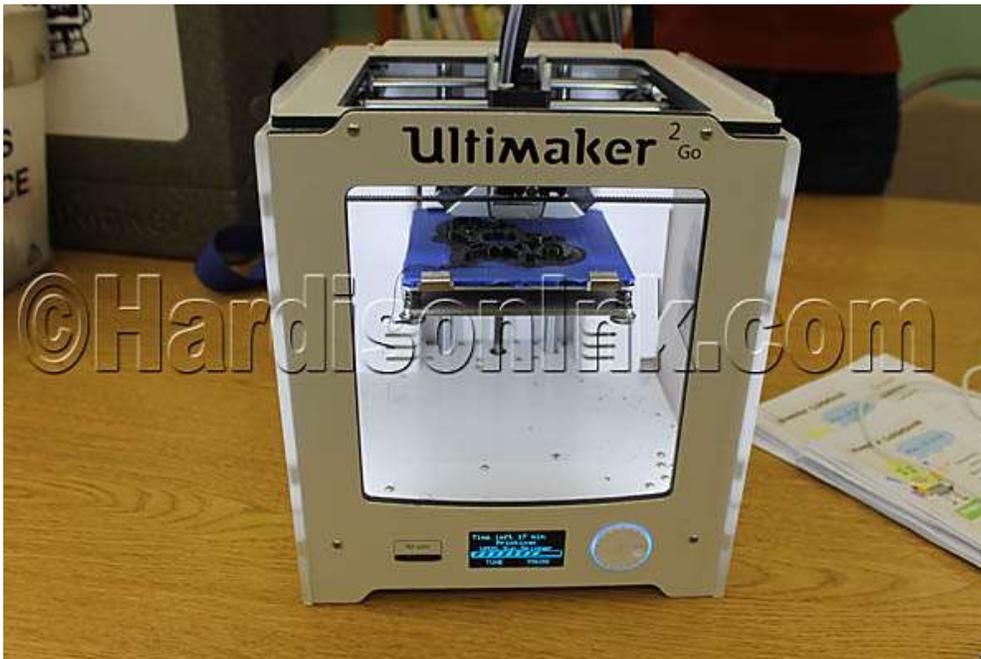
In the Technology Petting Zoo part of the program, people can become familiar with a very wide range of technology that is currently available to improve the quality of life of people, as well as to have fun.

The 2018 Invention Convention has been announced during the programs. Read about the 2018 Invention Convention at the bottom of this story. That started March 12 and ends April 14 with prizes for all entrants, including a 3-D Printer as the top prize.

After the computer class portion of the evening Thursday in Bronson, participants learned about the Alexa and Google Home programs; the Ultimaker 2 Go 3-D Printer; the Microsoft Surface Pro; GPS Locator Tiles; solar-powered battery chargers; the GoPro camera system; and the Dash and Dot robots for learning how to write Code.

Following are some brief descriptions of what was seen or used. Where there are prices mentioned, those are from quick research on the Internet. People will find prices to be higher and lower depending on finer points on what they might want to purchase.

The 3-D printer is shown about 17-minutes before finishing the creation of a fidget spinner.

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The 3-D printer is shown about after just finishing the creation of a fidget spinner, which took one hour. Notice this is all in one piece of plastic. Also notice that the assembly platform has lowered to the bottom of the machine. As the hot, molten plastic is shot out of a tube, directed by a computer program, if creates things layer by layer. That is removed from the printer and the spare bits of plastic are removed from the edges. This is a two-piece spinner that snaps together and then can be spun.

The fidget spinner – completely printed, trimmed and assembled.

Ultimaker 2 Go 3-D Printer

The Ultimaker 2 Go is small in size, but big in print quality, its manufacturer notes on its webpage.

The Ultimaker 2 Go is the most powerful little 3D printer around at a price of $1,200 or so. With durable packaging for safe travels, it's great for makers on the go.

During a one-hour session in the Bronson Public Library, this machine accepted a sting of plastic, heated it and put together a fidget spinner in one hour. 3D printers can make all sorts of things.

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Microsoft Surface Pro

The Microsoft Surface Pro tablet is among the items that was on display.

The price range for these varies from several hundreds of dollars to a couple of thousand.

This is said to be the ultimate laptop with versatility of a studio and tablet. Rodgers showed how the model she uses can be taken apart to be a single-piece tablet, or it can be put together to use as a laptop computer that can be placed on a table too.

GPS Locator Tiles

GPS Locator Tiles are a small, relatively inexpensive thing that is small and can be put on a keychain.

With the Tile app, it connects the user with the world's largest lost-and-found community, where friends and strangers work together to find everything that matters.

If a Tile is connected to a person's keychain, then the app lets the person find it. The tile makes a noise as well as showing a map on the phone so the person can find their keys.

One person at the event that night mentioned that she uses the Tile to place on a senior citizen who can become lost. She can find that person and the Tile makes a noise as she looks for him or her.

While that is an unconventional use of the hardware and software, it is something to consider for other applications to use this locator device.

Solar-Powered Battery Chargers

Another piece of technology is the solar-powered battery chargers.

For people who use cell phones, computers and other battery-powered devices, this hardware uses sunlight to create power and then it can transfer that as electricity to the device to recharge the device.

The GoPro Camera System

The GoPro Hero 5 Series is about $200.

This little camera is portable, waterproof and easy to use. People can buy all sorts of attachments to carry it everywhere.

This photo shows the box that contains Bloxels. With this device, a person can create their own video games.

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In this video, one of the two robots is seen in action on Thursday night at the Bronson Public Library for about one minute, and then there is about one minute of the 3-D printer making a fidget spinner.

Dot and Dash Robots

   Teachers of students of every age, from kindergarten through high school can use a couple of robots for a method to learn about writing computer code.

   Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) are learned during programs at the Bronson Public Library.

   The weekly classes for children are held during daylight hours and the children in the class now are home-schooled.

   People who say they program in HTML are generally mistaken about programming. HTML is a markup language and CSS is a style sheet language.

   However, the proverbial bottom line is that these children have learned to take apart and put together the computer hardware, and they have mastered the codes needed to create Web pages.

   The robots Rodgers showed at the Tech Petting Zoo in Bronson on Thursday night are educational tools for that purpose.

   There were several other items available for hands-on use, and to let the public learn about technology at their public library.

   One of those was the 3-D Virtual Reality Glasses. By putting a smart phone in them and downloading a video, the person wearing the glasses can experience a virtual reality view.

   Among the "rides" enjoyed by one viewer on Thursday evening were a trip into space, a rollercoaster ride and a parasail trip that had some very exciting elements – including floating over high-tension electrical power lines.

   The Technological Petting Zoo was a success in Bronson, as it has been at the other libraries and is planned to succeed in Williston tomorrow (Saturday, March 17).

In this video from a Tech Petting Zoo from a couple of years ago, the 3-D printer is seen in action.

   Click HERE to read a January of 2016 story about Levy County 4-H members learning about technology at the library.

The 2018 Make Life Easier Invention Convention

   The 2018 Make Life Easier Invention Convention is a Putnam-Alachua-Levy Libraries Cooperative venture, however only Levy and Putnam counties' libraries are participating this year.

   The contest started March 12 and ends April 14. Some participants have started; however, it is not too late to start now.

Levy County Library System Youth Services-IT Manager Jenny Rodgers said every single Levy County participant is going to win a prize, even if the prize is a candy bar.

There are top prizes, though, far beyond edible candy.

Prizes will be awarded at each of Levy County's five public libraries -- A.F. Knotts Public Library (Yankeetown), Bronson Public Library, Cedar Key Public Library, Luther Callaway Public Library (Chiefland) and Williston Public Library.

At each library there will be winners in two age categories. The age divisions are 6 to 10 years old, and 11 to 18 years old.

The five first place winners in the 6- to 10-year range at the county level wins a 3-D Doodler Pen. The five first place winners in the 11- to 18-year range at the county level wins a Kindle Fire Tablet.

The first-place winner in the two-county contest wins a 3-D printer.

The Make Life Easier Invention Convention competition is at the local libraries. There are two ways to compete. The participant can tell about their creative and innovative idea or invention to make life easier; or they can tell about their favorite inventor (living or historical) or their favorite invention.

This will involve more than just dropping in to say to a librarian or library manager something verbally.

There is a four-page booklet available for participants to use. The pamphlet is easy to read. It gives tips for making a quality invention display; ways to think about inventing and creating; a message to inventors; questions for inventors to answer in the journal they create as part of the project; and an introduction to the process of inventing something to solve a problem – to make life easier.

There is also a form to be completed by the applicant and parent or guardian.

These items that are required to compete are available at each of the five public libraries in Levy County.