

Camp focuses on hobbies

Eleven-year-old Gage Cuccia of Elmsford built an electronic game he designed himself.

Lauren Urrico of Hawthorne, 13, is making videos.

Marcus McCallum, 11, of Briarcliff Manor, took apart and reassembled a radio-controlled car, which still works.

Shaquan Nadal, 9, of Croton-on-Hudson, built a three-engine rocket and shot it 2,000 feet into the sky.

Welcome to summer camp. Sort of.

"It's kind of like sneaky school," 11-year-old Armonk resident Taline Karoziachia says of Hawthorne-based Discover Camp, where she designed her first-ever website (legoinformer.com) and put it online. "I mean, we do sit in classrooms and learn stuff, but in school you don't get to choose what you want to do, and you can't talk to your friends in class or listen to music. We can do all that here, so it's fun."

Fun learning is the whole idea,

according to director Anthony Rich, a White Plains native who founded the camp in 2008 to teach kids hobbies and hands-on skills they can take with them the rest of their lives.

"I started a hobby camp because that was what I was passionate about," said Rich, who now lives in Hawthorne and works in the Eastchester elementary schools, teaching kids to use computers and showing teachers how to integrate computers into their curriculums.

"We base the courses on whatever interests the kids. A lot of enrichment programs are geared toward kids identified as gifted and talented. Ours is different — it's open to all kids, because we

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think all kids can benefit from these kinds of enrichment courses," he said.

The camp mixes traditional camp activities, including **sports** and crafts, with more technical hobbies and out-of-the-ordinary activities. There are introduction and advanced rocketry courses, a woodworking course where students are making pendulum clocks, jewelry making, metal smithing, ultimate Frisbee, web publishing, robotics, chess, golf, architecture, electronic game construction, skateboarding, vaudeville, writing, go carting and more.

Discover Camp started with about 10 classes, 40 kids and five instructors, Rich said. This year, there are 60 classes, 60 employees and 262 campers.

"It's just exploded," Rich said. "I think part of the reason is that a lot of kids don't get much exposure to some of these activities. And when they do, they become hobbies for life. It's really not a four-week camp. It's a 12-month camp."

Rich, who has taught hobby

classes for years, said most of the instructors are friends and many are former students.

Campers, who range in age from 4 to 15, typically take four courses during the full-day session.

Vivian Kaiser of Chappaqua, 11, signed up for video and movie-making, painting, **soccer** and rock climbing.

"It's a fun way to learn," she said. "We get to express ourselves and have fun. We skateboard down the hallways. That's not something you would do in school."

Gage, who made an electronic shooting game, said it took "a lot of soldering, but I wanted to make a game. The time went by fast, and it was worth it. I don't have a

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name for it yet but I'm already addicted to playing it."

Shaquan said that even though he had to sit in a classroom to study aerodynamics and other science before building his rocket, "This is definitely camp, not school. We have a lot of fun here and you don't have to stay as focused as you do when you're in school. And it's pretty exciting to see something I made go so high into the air."

Before he came to camp, Marcus had never built a radio-controlled car before, much less taken one apart.

"I saw it in the catalogue and it just caught my interest," he said. "It was a little challenging, but the teachers were very helpful. When I put it together I was a little nervous that it wouldn't work. When it did, it felt really, really good. It goes pretty fast too. I think it's more fun to play with something that you built yourself."

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