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In quest of the quark

May 19, 2015

Updated May 15, 2015 12:20 p.m.

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One student is new to the country, another student speaks seven languages. English is not their first language, but for these two students, and 18 others selected, an interest in chemistry and science is what draws them into a classroom early on a Saturday morning.

Linda Bartrom-Olsen, a chemistry teacher at Villa Park High School, assisted by biology teacher, Cody Hutchings, recently convened her third annual bilingual workshop for English-as-a-second-language learners and interested parents, to introduce the concepts of chemistry and physics.

A number of the students attending will enter as freshmen at VPHS next fall, but the majority are currently enrolled in the high school.

The pre-chemistry workshops are based on Bartrom's book, "In Quest of the Quark: A Student's First Introduction to Chemistry and Elementary Particle Physics," first written in English and then translated and published in Spanish.

Bartrom, a member of the Rotary Club of Villa Park, received a matching grant from Rotary District 5320 to fund the workshop and provide a backpack of materials for each student, including the book in English and "En Busca del Quark" in Spanish, a periodic table, an expanded periodic table, hand-outs and supplies. Members of the VPHS Interact Club, the service organization for high school students sponsored by Rotary, were also up early to help coordinate and assist with the workshop.