USU Extension 4-H Members Learn Computer Programming with Google Fiber

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Utah State University Extension 4-H members and their families recently participated in a youth-led computer programming event at Google Fiber in Provo during Computer Science Education Week in December.

As part of the activity, youth and their family members used the Scratch programming language to design their own interactive Google doodles, or logo variations. Younger youth programmed scenes with familiar PBS cartoon characters using the PBS KIDS Scratch Jr. App.

Another highlight of the event was the micro:bit, a tiny programmable computer. Since 4-H emphasizes experiential learning, the physical buttons, sensors and display of the micro:bit gave the youth and their families another, more tactile way to interact with their creations. Youth created animations, music and simple games for others to enjoy.

"We were hoping to send the other 4-H members home with a new desire to learn computer programming, and the knowledge to do so," said Micah Van Roosendaal, a Utah County 4-H STEM Ambassador.

Approximately 20 youth and 10 adults participated in the activity. Dallin Graham, Extension assistant professor of STEM, assisted the five 4-H STEM Ambassadors in organizing the activity.

“To many people, computer programming is a foreign language,” Graham said. “But we need to understand how to communicate with computers for our work every day. I think it’s part of a digital literacy that all of us need.”

For more information about USU Extension 4-H programs, visit utah4h.org.

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