



LUCIAN READ

JUMPING IN Gene Ritter (in dive suit) and Lenny Speregen teach students about marine archeology during demo Tuesday. The scientists talked about their work inspecting underwater support structures and showed artifacts.

Kids' science forum proves fun-damental

A team of scientists converged on the Yeshiva of Flatbush Elementary School this week to give students a crash course in the many career paths open to scientists.

From an aquatic researcher to a zoologist, the 23 scientists who participated Tuesday in this year's Science Institute — dubbed "It's Terrific to be Scientific" — performed experiments and hands-on demonstrations to showcase science in action.

Veterinarian Michael Keschner, a Yeshiva alumnus who runs Pet Haven Animal Hospital on McDonald Ave., regaled students with a macaw, a Labrador named Linden (after the boulevard on which he was found) and a wild Quaker parakeet he nursed back to health.

Meanwhile, other students learned about marine archeology and commercial scuba diving from partners Gene Ritter and Lenny Speregen, who brought in old anchors, fishing weights and glass bottles they discovered hidden off the Steeplechase Pier in Coney Island.

And emergency medical technician Ari Brand mesmerized students with a presentation called "How to Help Save a Life." Brand demonstrated to eager students how to perform the Heimlich maneuver and recounted how he once had to save his own sister's life.

"You've saved a lot of lives," said awestruck fifth-grader Isaac Esses, 10.

Principal Leonard Zeplin said the institute is designed to inspire students to pursue science careers by exposing them to

the broad array of jobs that working scientists perform.

This year's event was the third held at the 1,350-student school on E. 10th St., officials said.

The last science institute was held in 1999.

"It's science by doing," said Zeplin. "We want to show that science is interesting."

Science teacher Ron Schweiger — who also is Brooklyn's official borough historian — echoed the enthusiasm.

"To kids, a scientific experiment is like a magician performing a magic trick," said Schweiger, adding that the fair helps turn children on to the wonders of science all around them.

"But the difference is magicians won't tell you their secrets, while a scientist is happy to explain what's going on."

Tuesday's fair was kicked off by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, who urged students to ask the scientists

as many questions as they could think of.

"I hope that you will get an interest," he said. "The future depends on your brilliance."

After breaking into groups for demonstrations and lectures by the various scientists, the school's third-, fourth- and fifth-graders gathered for a question-and-answer forum with all the assembled specialists.

Keschner said he hoped the event inspired students to follow their dreams — just as he did when he became a veterinarian.

"They shouldn't give up," he said.

*'It's science
by doing.
We want to
show that
science is
interesting.'*
Leonard Zeplin