

Virginia's First Smart Community STEM Camp Takes Flight

VIPC, Society of American Military Engineers, Skydio, Little Arms Studio, and Tuskegee Airmen expand horizons for teens in Emerging Technology

STAFFORD, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Technology, diversity, opportunity, and teamwork were the common themes at [Virginia's](#) first Smart Community STEM Camp. The gathering of 28 teens was led by US Naval Academy graduates and Public Safety leaders who facilitated the hands-on training and experience necessary to become professionally licensed drone pilots.



“Real-world Hands-on experience is important”, according to Chris Sadler, Director of Virginia’s Public Safety Innovation Center at VIPC. “We wanted to provide these teens with the same training and flight operation testing used by public safety professionals so they are ready for FAA testing and licensing and to further expand their horizons for employment using emerging technology.”

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Mira Marquez, Skydio

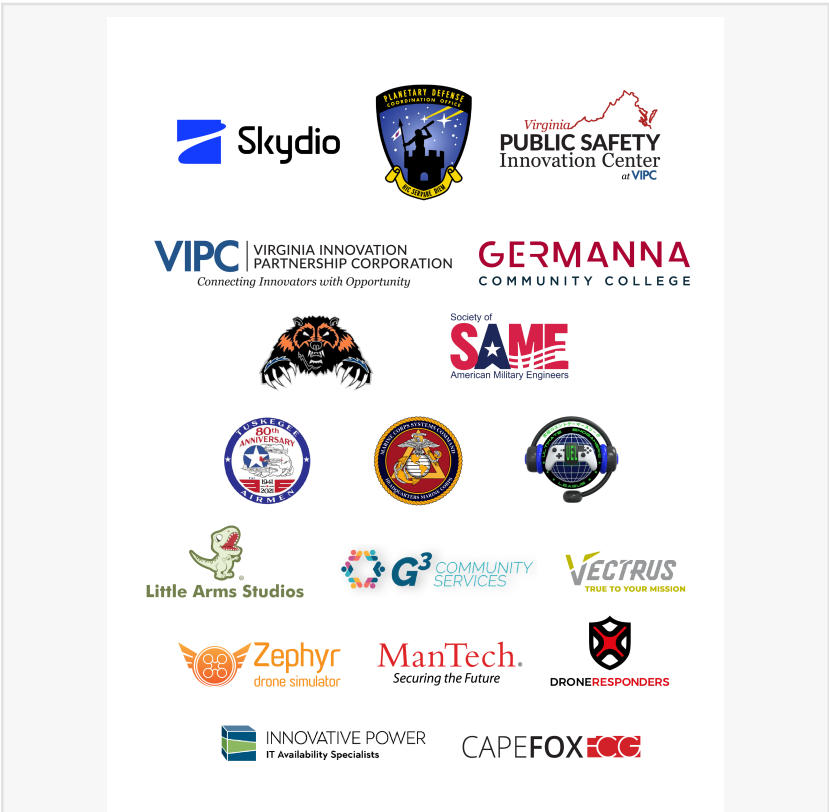
The 3-Day STEM camp, organized by Camp Director George Hinckley was supported by North Stafford High School administration and staff, and sponsored by the Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC), The Society of

American Military Engineers (SAME), [Skydio](#), The Tuskegee Airmen, Little Arms Studio and more than a dozen other sponsors and mentors from State and local public safety agencies. Their collective goal is to expand the horizon for teen workforce development in Emerging Technology, the Future of Learning, and National Security.

“Exposing students to diverse opportunities and pathways to employment is an important part of public education,” said Stafford County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Thomas W. Taylor. “I appreciate the numerous partners who developed the curriculum for this camp, and thank them for exposing our students to future technology. Our school division looks forward to hosting more opportunities like these for our students in the future.”

Skydio, the leading U.S. drone manufacturer and world leader in autonomous flight, generously provided and donated ten Skydio 2 Pro Kits to the Tuskegee Airmen organization for STEM Camp flight training and additional training opportunities. They also incentivized the camp participants' success with more than \$3,000 in scholarships to cover certification fees and additional FAA classes. Skydio's spokesperson Mira Marquez commented, “We are excited to support youth in their discovery and use of drone technology. We are committed to facilitating their opportunity to become FAA-licensed drone pilots. Our industry is growing and we need to ensure we have a workforce that is ready to embrace UAS innovation.”

Throughout the week, students worked in small groups led by US Naval Academy graduates and learned the importance of teamwork and communication in-flight operation success. Their training featured the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) course that public safety professionals use to demonstrate skill proficiency. On the final day of camp, was Esports Day, hosted at Ultimate Endgamers League with mentors from Team Karma.



Public / Private Partnership Makes Camp a Success. Sponsors expand horizons for teen workforce development.



Camp Director George Hinckley addresses participants and sponsors at Virginia's First Smart Community STEM Camp at North Stafford High School.

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“The most interesting part of this camp was learning how drones are already being used by organizations (such as law enforcement) to find people and conduct rescues,” said Rubi Gonzalez, a junior at North Stafford High School in Stafford, VA. “I’m really excited to expand my learning of drone technology.”

The STEM camp also provided a unique opportunity for organizations like “Yes We Can” from the Eastern Shore of Virginia / Maryland to connect teens with technology. According to Camp Director George Hinckley, this camp was just the beginning of opportunities for Virginia to lead in teen workforce development and technology engagement.

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About Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPC)

Connecting innovators with opportunities. The nonprofit operations arm of the Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (VIPA), VIPC is the commercialization and seed stage economic development driver in the Commonwealth that leads funding, infrastructure, and policy initiatives to support Virginia's innovators, entrepreneurs, startups, and market development strategies. VIPC collaborates with local, regional, state, and federal partners to support the expansion and diversification of Virginia’s economy.

Programs include: Virginia Venture Partners (VVP) | Virginia Founders Fund (VFF) | Commonwealth Commercialization Fund (CCF) | Smart Communities | Unmanned Systems | Public Safety Innovation | Entrepreneurial Ecosystems | Regional Innovation Fund (RIF) | Federal Funding Assistance Program (FFAP) for SBIR & STTR | University Partnerships | Startup Company Mentoring & Engagement. For more information, please visit www.VirginiaIPC.org. Follow VIPC on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.



Teens receive the hands-on training and experience necessary to become professionally licensed drone pilots.



Skydio's Mira Marquez (on left) helps STEM camp participants understand Drone flight dynamics.

About Skydio

Skydio is the leading U.S. drone manufacturer and world leader in autonomous flight. Skydio leverages breakthrough AI to create the world's most intelligent flying machines for use by consumer, enterprise, and government customers. Founded in 2014, Skydio is made up of leading experts in AI, robotics, cameras, and electric vehicles from top companies, research labs, and universities from around the world. Skydio designs, assembles, and supports its products in the U.S. from its headquarters in Redwood City, CA, to offer the highest standards of supply chain and manufacturing security. Skydio is trusted by leading enterprises across a wide range of industry sectors and is backed by top investors and strategic partners including Andreessen Horowitz, Levitate Capital, Next47, IVP, Playground, and NVIDIA.

About SAME

The Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) unites public and private sector individuals and organizations from across the architecture, engineering, construction, environmental, facility management, contracting and acquisition fields and related disciplines in support of the United States' national security.[1]

SAME connects architects, engineers and builders in the public sector and private industry, uniting them to improve individual and collective capabilities to provide the capability and prepare for and overcome natural and man-made disasters, acts of terrorism and to improve security at home and abroad.

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