Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday, 31 May 2017

Children’s University enlists robots to inspire primary school students

The University of Tasmania’s Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment is this year combining the powers of two successful programs – Robots in Schools and the Children’s University.

Over the past two years, robot cars have been transforming Tasmanian primary school students into science and technology enthusiasts.

At the same time, the Children’s University program has been rolled out to select schools, inspiring a love of learning.

This year, at Herdsmans Cove Primary School, the two programs will come together for the first time.

Deputy Director of the Peter Underwood Centre, Dr Becky Shelley, said children had enthusiastically embraced the Robots in Schools project, which saw them building and programming robotic vehicles to complete an obstacle course.

“Working with robots is exactly the sort of thing that captures young imaginations and it’s fantastic to see it become part of Children’s University Tasmania,” Dr Shelley said.

“We are already seeing positive effects from the Children’s University Tasmania, with participating students reporting a greater sense of achievement and an intention to continue with their education.”

The Children’s University participants take part in a wide range of voluntary extracurricular learning at validated Learning Destinations, tracking their efforts in learning passports. Their achievements are celebrated at annual graduation ceremonies, where they lead the University of Tasmania town and Gown processions in December.

So far, 280 participants across 14 schools have clocked almost 8500 hours of extracurricular learning.
Herdsmans Cove Principal Carolyn Brown said the school community was excited to bring the Children’s University program to the area.

“Inspiring a love and a passion for learning and for science, technology and engineering is so important for the future of our children, and for our community,” Ms Brown said.

“The children have loved working with robots – it’s fun, but it’s also preparing them for some of the things the ideas and some of the skills they will need to learn to support their education in our rapidly evolving world.”

Over four sessions of robotic training, the Underwood Centre’s Stuart Thorn has taught students, and teachers, how to build a robotic car from basic components, and how to control it using keyboard inputs.

Students are then taught some basic coding skills so they can program their vehicle to complete a simple obstacle course.

**Media Opportunity**

**What:** Students will work with Stuart Thorn from the Peter Underwood Centre to program robotic cars to complete a short obstacle course. Dr Becky Shelley, Deputy Director of the Peter Underwood Centre will be available for interview.

**When:** 2.30pm to 3.30pm, TOMORROW (Thursday, 1 June 2017).

**Where:** Herdsmans Cove Primary School, 2 Lamprill Circle, Herdsmans Cove.

**Information released by:**
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Phone: 61 3 6324 3218 or 0438 510 616
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au