Hour of Code sparks interest in computer science

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More than 2,500 students from across northern New Mexico took an hour to delve into the world of computer programming during the recent Hour of Code, a global program that takes place each year during Computer Science Education Week. More than 180 countries participate in the international learning opportunity, reaching tens of millions of students.

Northern New Mexico schools partnered with computer programmers from Los Alamos National Laboratory to demystify code for students.

"The Hour of Code is a simple and fun way of showing kids what programming is all about," said volunteer programmer Frances Castellano, who works in the High Performance Computing Division at the Laboratory and was one of 50 volunteers who helped facilitate the sessions at regional schools. "If they like it, if they get excited about it, then it opens the doors for them to explore the thought of going to college to pursue a degree in programming."

Castellano encouraged her son, Marcos, a junior at New Mexico State University who also works at the Laboratory as an undergraduate student, to volunteer for the Hour of Code alongside with her. Both Castellanos facilitated a session in Ms. Cordova's 5th grade class at Pojoaque Elementary—the same class Marcos had once sat in himself.

"Seeing Marcos volunteering to help at his former school made me proud that he was paying it forward to help others," Castellano explained.

Castellano also volunteered for an Hour of Code in Taos during the same week.

"It's important for kids to not be intimidated when they hear 'programming.' Some students probably think it is too hard, and that they can't do it. But after doing the Hour of Code, I could see that they were understanding it," Castellano said. "We need more students to go into programming, especially in New Mexico."

For additional information, visit the [Hour of Code website](#).

Community Connections features news and opportunities that grow out of the Laboratory's Good Neighbor Pledge: "To partner with our neighbors on strengthening math and science learning, diversifying the economy and expanding community giving in northern New Mexico."