



# NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Back-to-school means back to Science Saturdays

The Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition is where Gabriela Sullivan's passion for science education flourished.

This fall, she's coming back to share it with the next generation.

As a high schooler, Sullivan was a regular volunteer at IHMC's Science Saturdays STEM enrichment program for students in grades 3 through 6. She remembers being in awe of the researchers and teachers who could encourage and inspire a room full of young minds.

"Their ability to convey complex concepts in a way that was both understandable and exciting fascinated me," she said. "It made me want a career that involved science education."

She made that dream a reality. Sullivan graduated from the University of Florida and now works for the City of Ocala as water conservation coordinator. In October she will lead a Science Saturday of her own at the Ocala campus. Her topic will be healthy wetlands.

"Today's youth will be the scientists of tomorrow, and throughout my session, I want students to feel engaged and included, knowing that there is a place for them in the field of science," she said.

For nearly 16 years, Science Saturdays has been opening doors for kids like Sullivan. IHMC's popular monthly science enrichment series starts its next season Sept. 30 in Pensacola and Sept. 9 at the Ocala campus. Sessions slated for the fall include science of the mind, game design, healthy wetlands and more.

Dr. Ursula Schwuttke is the director of educational outreach for both IHMC's Pensacola and Ocala campuses. Schwuttke says that the impact of the series is what keeps it compelling for families – and for IHMC staff.

Sometimes the impact is immediate – seeing the spark of imagination and engagement in a child's face. Sometimes the reveal takes longer, but the payoff is immense.



Sullivan is a perfect example of that.

“Knowing that I can share my knowledge with students is a full-circle moment,” Sullivan said. “What makes it even more exciting, is that I get to talk about the science of water and wetlands, two areas of study that are often overlooked, but incredibly important to maintaining healthy a society.”

Roman Bassett is a Pensacola High School graduate who now attends the University of Florida studying mechanical engineering. Bassett was a Science Saturdays volunteer in Pensacola and said it was an experience that made him realize how deeply invested in subjects he could become. It also helped him realize how much he enjoyed teaching and learning together, including both with younger students and with peers.

He still distinctly remembers lessons from Science Saturday, including homemade electric motors and paper planes. He hopes that future Science Saturdays attendees leave with the same message he took from the experience: Have fun learning.

“Exploring your interests and learning cool new things is one of the most exciting things you can do” he says.

Last school year, more than 330 students from 28 Escambia and Santa Rosa elementary schools attended these weekend sessions. 42 percent of attendees are female; 58 percent were male.

Parents of girls reported greater impact on scientific curiosity, self-confidence in science, and self-confidence overall.

Boys and girls alike got a boost in their enjoyment of science and grades in science from Science Saturdays.

“We see that Science Saturdays makes a difference in the lives of our students, and we are grateful to our sponsors for helping us reach families who might not be able to offer their children hands-on science if our events weren’t free,” Schwuttke said.

The sessions are free and sign up is available at [https://www.ihmc.us/life/science\\_saturdays/](https://www.ihmc.us/life/science_saturdays/)

In Pensacola, Premier Community sponsorship from Florida Power & Light supports the series. Annual sponsors Florida Blue Foundation and Cox, and season sponsors Escambia Sheriff’s Office, Barnes Insurance, and International Paper Foundation help make the Pensacola sessions possible. In Ocala, sponsors Lockheed Martin, Florida Blue Foundation, Cox, Ron and Phyllis Ewers, and Precision Sidewalk Safety support the series in that community.

## **SCIENCE SATURDAY FALL SCHEDULE**

The schedule for Science Saturday for the Fall is complete. Share the link with friends with children in grades 3-6 [https://www.ihmc.us/life/science\\_saturdays/](https://www.ihmc.us/life/science_saturdays/)



Sept. 23: Science of the Mind, Dr. Kevin Gluck

Oct. 28: Electric Motors, Dr. Robert Griffin

Nov. 18: Computer Game Design, Heath Parr, Brown-Barge Middle School

Dec. 17: Illusions, Dr. Toshi Miyatsu

### **Ocala Sessions**

Sept. 8: The Lives of Moths, Dr. Andrei Sourakov, University of Florida

Oct. 7: Healthy Wetlands, Gabriela Sullivan, City of Ocala

Nov. 11: Computer Game Design, Dr. Ian Perera

Dec. 2: Arash Mahyari, Electric Circuits

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