

CERDEC, C3T Lead the Way for STEM Students

By Jasmyne Douglas, *The C3T Wire*

In a classroom illuminated by standard-issued fluorescent lighting, a group of students huddle around a cluster of desks. Research materials and heavily inked, wire-bound notebooks were strewn haphazardly across the surface. Ideas flew back and forth as they deliberated their next course of action. A decision was made and the sound of electrical tape, dull and black, being stretched, ripped, and tacked onto the side of a Styrofoam container pierced the air. After months of work, their project was finally complete. The end product? A renewable energy Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system made entirely out of affordable materials.

The students of C. Milton High School had an added source of expertise from Technical Writers from the Communication Electronic Research and Development Engineering Center (CERDEC), Command Control Communications-Tactical (C3T) and other directorates across CECOM during their capstone project for Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a nonprofit organization that develops Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) curricula for use by elementary, middle and high schools across the United States.

“It was so outside of what they were used to having and there was really a lack there,” Rachael Brown, Training Design & Development for the CERDEC Outreach Office, said. “So giving some of them the confidence to be able to communicate what they’re doing and what they’re trying to achieve I think really helped them go a little bit further than just the technical engineering part. It’s one thing to know all of that stuff. It’s another thing to be able to communicate that and to apply it.”

The first of its kind to be offered by CERDEC, the idea to provide a technical writing workshop for the students came after a teacher from the high school contacted the Outreach Office.

“We typically support the Project Lead the Way group and a lot of the time, we do different panels,” Mikale Brutus, an Outreach Specialist for the Outreach Office, said. “This time, the teacher reached out and said ‘Hey, one area we’re really lacking in is technical writing skills’. So, they asked if that’s something we could offer here from APG.”

The Outreach Office recruited several Technical Writers with various years of experience and backgrounds to assist the students, including Janice Millan, a Recent Graduate Technical Writer-Editor for the Tactical Radio-Command and Control (TRaC2) Division of the C3T Directorate.

“Being a recent grad, I was excited to work with the young adults from C. Milton High

because tech writing is fairly new to me too,” Millan said. “We were able to share ideas on different ways their project could be executed, so it was really cool to gain perspective and strategies from them as well.”

According to Brutus, the ability to assist with programs like PLTW and showing students how STEM can be fun is one of the many reasons why she is proud to work for the Army and the Outreach Office.

“Technology is everywhere and it’s getting more and more complicated,” Brutus said. “We’re going to need those engineers. We’re going to need those STEM field careers. The Army will find a way to reach these underrepresented communities and make sure that all of these kids out here are receiving the resources that they need to actually make it and hopefully become engineers that will come back and support the Army just the same.”