

# EDUCATION

## State of the art: Robotics by a Yavapai-Apache

By Don Decker  
YAN News

Friday is a day off for Camp Verde Elementary students but not for Onica Stout, a 10 year old 5th grader Yavapai-Apache. Stout is totally immersed in designing robotics at the school while most of her classmates are at home perhaps watching TV or still sleeping early this Friday morning while the Camp Verde students are gathered in the classroom looking at computer screens and assembling plastic LEGO robots about 4 inches high.

Stout is the daughter of Helen Stout and Mark Feeling of Middle Verde. Young Stout has 2 brothers and a sister. Stout's grandmother is Christine Cook of Middle Verde.

"This is the brain of it," says Stout as she points to the center of the robot's chest where the small device is placed after it is programmed on the computer. Once the robot is programmed it can perform a number of functions on the large table where the pathway of the robot has been laid out to pick up things,

to move things or turn in certain directions. All the motions have been preprogrammed by Stout on the computer. "This is how you control it. It was designed to do this. It's an EB-3".

Stout says she takes the lap top home but the robotics is only done at the school. One can tell that Stout is bound to become a robotic designer as a professional in the future.

Three times per week the small group of students gather in the classroom where the LEGO robots are assembled and programmed to perform certain functions that are designed by the students. Teacher Peggy Dickie brings all of the knowledge with her to the class and begins the task of laying out the lesson plans which engages the students with their own robot.

"You have to have good grades to participate in this program," said Dickie.

Stout responded to that by saying that she "...makes A's and B's but mostly A's".

Dickie shows just as much energy as the students when she talks about the Youth Engineering Program. "They have to design these



Onica Stout (center) is surrounded by fellow classmates on a Friday morning in the robotics lab at Camp Verde Elementary School. (Photo by Don Decker)

themselves. I can't help them. That's part of the competition, completing the LEGO TREK," says Dickie in reference to the robot that Stout is working with.

"To accomplish certain mission on the table you have to program the robot like to use one wheel or both wheels to spin around," said

Stout. Most of the events at robot meets are timed and points are awarded for all completed tasks. "I like this class because it teaches you about robots and technology," said Stout who referred to the Mars Rover which is a programmed robot roaming the surface of Mars. "I like it because it's on Mars".

There is a small cable device which is hooked up the robot which downloads the information from the computer by pressing 'start'. "It's not a remote control robot," Dickie emphasizes. Presently, certain "issues" have to be addressed according to Dickie. "We have to fix the mistakes, if

any," said Dickie who knows all of the parts to the robot such as the different sensors. "The students are not allowed to follow books for competition—it has to be their own design," added Dickie.

Stout was called upon to meet with a large corporation that is based in Camp Verde to explore the possibility of funding the school robotic program. Dickie said that Stout stood before the corporate presidents in a meeting room and explained the classroom activities.

The Johnson O'Malley Program (JOM) from the Nation pays for all of the Nation's student's transportation and the associated costs of the activity.

Roberta Quail, JOM tutor, works closely with Dickie in the robotics program. This past summer Quail and Dickie spent a week inside of the Biosphere in Oracle north of Tucson.

"There's a lot of math and engineering involved with this program and it leads to a pathway that leads to scholarships which gets the students ready for college," said Dickie.

## A Hawaiian experience on Yavapai-Apache Nation

By Don Decker  
YAN News

Take a drive along Middle Verde Road below the Cliff Castle Casino on any Friday and you will see a sign that announces a menu for "Hawaiian food" with an abbreviated menu. And not far from this sign is Sam Plunkett's roadside Hawaiian "café" which features all of the delicacies of the Island's cooking.

Sam's been at the same area for over 13 years now and his food is DELICIOUS because it is made with his soul.

It goes back almost 60 years ago when Sam was raised by his grandparents on the island of Maui on the chain of islands in the South Pacific. If you've ever been there, you will know the island is exotic with coconut trees and greenery that makes the Verde Valley look a parched land razed by fire.

Sam talks about growing up near the Wailea Golf Course, on the "BIG island" where the ocean laps on the coast line not far away. "I grew up on the plantation where my grandparents worked for the Hawaii Sugar Company. My grandfather had a ranch about a mile from the camp," recalls Sam. The time frame is somewhere around 1950 with his earliest recollection of learning the blood, sweat and tears of growing up in harsh times. He remembers at the young age of 5 how he and his grandparents packing tea leaves with pork and chicken for a church revival. On a typical week, this meant preparing about 1500-2000 wrapped tea leaves "sandwiches" for hungry souls.

The leaves are about 2 feet long and 2 inches wide

and tied into bundles of 9 that are then wrapped tightly with the stems of the leaves at the top. "My grandfather use to dig a pit so wide (motions with his arms) and put core wood on top and then place hot rocks on top and finally crushed banana stumps to form the bedding for the tea leaf wraps," said Sam.

Sam recalls standing by the pit watching the whole process of cooking the food when his grandfather told him, "Grandson, you can't learn anything just standing here watching. Here, take this shovel and do something with it." At that point, Sam's father told grandpa Charlie Plunkett that young Sam was only 5 years old. That's when grandpa Plunkett said, "Don't worry about it, he'll grow into it".

Sam remembers standing by the pit as the tea leaf bundles were simmered and cooked for 18 hours from 6 p.m. the previous evening to the next mid-morning. "The fire was so hot and if you stood by the pit, it would burn your hair," recalls Sam.

Sam was taught to make the 5 different teriyaki sauce that he still considers to be his family recipe. "This is a secret. Grandpa had so much sauce it was unbelievable. The food would just melt in your mouth." And to this day, if you get a plate of Sam's dish, the chicken is loaded with this special sauce that has been handed down from previous generations. There's almost no need to chew the food as it is cooked in a tender manner and the rice is slightly marinated with the sauce that Sam talks about.

Go forward now to the present as you can often see Sam with a shovel in his

hand as he turns over the soil in his garden in Middle Verde. Early spring he prepares the soil and plants corn and a slew of vegetables that he uses in his menu at the food stand where he cooks his marinated chicken and pork. It's a natural for Sam Plunkett.

All the advice from Sam's grandfather is used in the affairs of Sam's daily life. "My grandfather use to say, 'grandson, because you give good service, good p.r. (public relations), you make people smile and treat them with respect, they'll always come back',".

Sam recently did a wedding at the Sky Lodge in Sedona at the airport with all the trimming of his sauces and pork-chicken-rice entree for 40 people and shortly thereafter, he had to cook for a conference held on the Nation's lands. It took 2 days of preparation for these events. Sam gets help from his grandson, Lenden or 'Montehya' which means 'Windy Stormy Day', a Yavapai name given by Delores, Sam's better half.

"I cook special meals for small family gatherings," he said since smaller meals are more manageable for him. One time he cooked 300 meals for a 7th Day Adventist church in Cottonwood. "I needed my family to join in and that is when I decided I didn't want to do big parties anymore—it takes a lot of work," he said.

### Earlier Days

In 1964, the armed services draft caught up with Sam as he was registered with the Selective Service and was drafted into the military. His first and only assignment was guarding



Sam and grandson, Mathahiyah prepare to pack up after a long day of selling dishes of Hawaiian food at the roadside stand below the casino. (Photo by Don Decker)

some military buildings on Johnson Island, some 700 miles southwest of Honolulu on an island no bigger than 1.5 miles long by a half mile wide. "I told my uncle, 'why do I want to go on the Rock?' " said Sam about Johnson Island. Later, Sam was to find out that there were bunkers on the island housing all sorts of high explosives and chemical missiles. That is when Sam became acquainted with a gas mask very quickly. "I slept with it on," recalls Sam. His unit was the 25th Army Division that dealt with chemical warfare. From there, Sam went to Vietnam with a C-130 plane a few times that retrieved the wounded and the dead and brought them back to the hospitals and morgues.

Sam has had a remarkable life including a stint working on a crab fishing boat in Alaska when he was

a young single man in 1970 when he was about 24 years old. He went up there with his cousin Fred from Maui and they took a hair-raising airplane ride to meet up with the ship that was docked in a small village which eventually made its way to the sea.

Working 12-16 hours a day on the boat made a man out of Sam and his cousin after saving \$10,000 in a few weeks, they went back to Hawaii.

And how about the Mormon missionary work in Navajoland? Sam traveled the roads to places like Kayenta, Shonto and Gallup to win souls. He also recalls digging a grave for a Navajo funeral in Shiprock while he was on the Mission for the church.

In later years, Sam became the Nation's policeman and remembers many of the grown adults today

who were youngsters then. Tanya Moore, executive secretary for the Nation recalls taking karate lessons from Sam.

If history plays a big role in people's lives, Sam has the stories to tell which has had a profound affect on him today.

In 1969 he married Delores who was raised by Fred and Lucy Beauty at the time.

Sam and Delores had 6 children and most of his relatives live in Maui. Delores may be returning to visit in Hawaii in December but Sam says he'll stay here.

Starting after December, Sam expects to be open 3 days a week cooking his best Hawaiian food. Stop by and check the menu out. By the way, everyone gets a pile of rice on each plate. It's traditional says Sam.



Laurie Kaaekuahiwi gives a graduation certificate to one of the students. (Photo by Don Decker)

## Children honored by YAN culture department

By Don Decker  
Yavapai-Apache News

YAN children who participate in the weekly language program at the Nation's culture center were honored by the staff of the culture department with a graduation ceremony.

This language program offered by the Nation under the auspices of the Title VII Program/Camp Verde School district, coordinated by tribal member Laurie Kaaekuahiwi, has been met with much success over the past several weeks.

Students are dropped off at the culture center Monday and Wednesdays to work with both the Yavapai and Apache culture department.

The Apache culture department under the direction of Vincent Randall, teaches language and all aspects of

Apache culture.

The graduation program included performances of Apache songs taught by Randall to the children and learning the counting systems. Jason Fullmer Jr., son of Jason, Sr. and Olivia led his fellow classmates in counting beyond 20 in Apache.

On the Yavapai side, students who worked with Reba Franco, Gertie Smith and Troy Kaska, cultural specialists, performed the Bird Dance with gourds and songs.

Kaaekuahiwi, counselor and coordinator of Title VII said she was grateful to the culture department and all of the departments involved.

"Thank you, thank you—to the culture departments, Camp Verde Elementary School, the bus barn, Y-A Recreation department, the parents, grandparents," said Kaaekuahiwi. "The

students did awesome and made me so very proud to be apart of their accomplishments. I absolutely love our tribal youth—they are the best--"

YAN community members expressed their appreciation to the departments who were involved with the language program. Dawn Beauty, parent, said, "Give yourselves a big pat on the back. I was very impressed with all that they learned. The culture department did a great job with all the kids!!! (emphasized). My son Jaden said he can't wait to learn more! (emphasized)".

Another parent, Thomasene Cardona said, "The history and language of our people is where we build inter/intra strength--!! (emphasized)".

There will be a new group of students coming in for the next cycle shortly.