

‘Creative thinkers’ come together in Charlotte

By Kathleen E. Conroy

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Charlotte Latin’s all-female seventh grade engineering class that found success with a \$35 computer will be featured at TEDxCharlotteED 2013 Feb. 14, along with a number of Charlotte “creative thinkers and doers” to foster debate, according to an organizer.

TED, which stands for technology, entertainment and design, is a nonprofit organization that started as a four-day conference in California 25 years ago.

In 2012, TEDxCharlotteED (adding ED for education) formed and had its first event.

“Charlotte’s group discussions are designed to highlight ideas worth spreading about transforming education,” said Lexee Zutz, co-organizer of TEDxCharlotteED. “How we educate our children and ourselves has a significant impact on everyone in our community, from individual quality of life to collective economic vitality.”

The Feb. 14 event will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. at Silver Hammer Studios at the NC Music Factory in Charlotte.

Zutz said that in addition to eight speakers that day, Charlotte Latin’s all-female engineering class will speak along with their advisor, Tom Dubick.

The group was selected to participate after a nomination from Barbara Caldwell, the executive director of Teaching Fellows Institute.

“This program was chosen because we feel there is a great need to let the community know how a relatively inexpensive technology could be used everywhere around the world,” said Zutz.

This past fall, Charlotte Latin added 14 credit-card sized computers to the middle school girl’s engineering class. Known as the Raspberry Pi, the inexpensive computers have been used in engineering community overseas but are new to the United States. The computer comes with Scratch and Python, languages used for beginner computer programming, and have been easy for the Charlotte Latin class to use, said Zutz.

According to the school, the female students are already programming and hope to learn the concept of

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TEDxCharlotteED will take place from 1 to 5 p.m. Feb. 14 at Silver Hammer Studios at the NC Music Factory, 817 Hamilton St. Charlotte 28206. Tickets are \$25 and are available at <http://tedxcharlotteed.com/attend/> or on www.eventbrite.com.

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physical computing through the use of robotics by the end of the course.

“These TEDx gatherings will focus on programs both inside and outside the classroom, and range from early childhood education to adult workforce development,” said Zutz. “TEDxCharlotteED is more than just a conference. It’s an event by creative thinkers, for creative thinkers, who embrace the spirit of ideas worth spreading. The audience will consist of people who believe in the power of learning and education to improve our community.”

The lineup of local educators, business owners, and nonprofit directors also include: Chef Ron Ahlert, Community Culinary School of Charlotte; Deborah Brown, Garinger High School; Amy Hawn Nelson, Institute for Social Capital; Mark Moore of Mother Administered Nutritive Aid; Dawn Peebles of Providence Preparatory School; Henry Rock of City Startup Labs; Cheryl Turner, Sugar Creek Charter School; and Clifton Vann IV, Livingston & Haven.

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