Hoping to inspire
Samper Fourth Grade Experience draws thousands to Cabrillo

By TODD GUILD

College Experience

Jihad Nismeddin (left) talks to Hall District Elementary School fourth-graders Friday at Cabrillo College about his studies in firefighting.

Cabrillo

After separating into small groups, students visited engineering classes, the performing arts department and the culinary program, and spoke with current students about their majors, their goals and their experiences.

They talked to future firefighters, chefs, musicians and criminal justice workers, in addition to a host of other majors.

Freedom Elementary School fourth-grade teacher Ray Bayburns said that, for many students whose parents didn’t go to college, considering attending one is “new territory.”

“It’s good for all kids to see college as something that’s accessible to all of them,” he said. “It’s not something unattainable.”

Hall District Elementary School student Juan Torres, who celebrated his 10th birthday Friday, said he wants to study computer science and someday be a video game designer.

Melissa Iniguez, 10, also from Hall District, said she was hoping to see the college’s culinary program, one day combining her humanitarian nature with her love for cooking.

“I’m hoping to travel around the world and be a chef and help people,” she said.

Hall District student Katherine Burke said she plays guitar and wanted to see the music department. She said it was her first time to a college campus.

“It’s very big and the classrooms are bigger,” she said. “I liked the big theater too.”

Mya Martinez said she enjoyed seeing the art displayed outside the studios.

“I want to see how they make the art,” she said. “I’ve always liked drawing things.”

Cabrillo student Gabriela Castro, who works as a teacher’s assistant in Cabrillo’s music department and will someday work in music education, was preparing several woodwind instruments for a hands-on demonstration she described as a “musical petting zoo.”

Castro, who graduated from Santa Cruz High School last year, said she found her personal artistic outlet through music. A college education, she said, is a way for young people to find their own outlets.

“T think it’s important to inspire the kids,” she said.

The Samper Fourth Grade Experience is run by Santa Cruz County College Commitment, which began in 2012 and is run by all Santa Cruz County K-12 school districts, Cabrillo College, CSU Monterey Bay, San Jose State University and UC Santa Cruz. It gets its name from Barbara Samper, who donated $1 million to the program.

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