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## FULL “STEAM” AHEAD—Educating our Youth in the Community After-School

Fit Kids is the Boothbay Region YMCA’s after-school program, which supports working families while fostering each child’s cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development through opportunities and experiences which focus on achievement, relationships, and belonging. This program is spearheaded by Lindsey Senecal, who is on her fourth year serving as our Fit Kids Coordinator.

The 2020–2021 school-year found our program shifting gears a bit, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than be based out of the Coastal Club room at the main Y, our program relocated to the Camp Knickerbocker Campus, functioning mostly out of the McEvoy Lodge. This opportunity has opened many doors for our program, as we can spend a lot more time outside. The fall months saw our Fit Kids learning how to build rope bridges, rope swings, fish off the dock, utilizing the playground and sports field, hiking, building forts in the “Forbidden Forest” and more! On days that we are forced inside due to foul weather, we play games, create skits, craft, and build with blocks.

Even in the winter months we are finding enjoyment outside. Jarod Wescott, the BRYMCA’s Marketing Director has a love for fishing that he’s been sharing with our participants since June. With the lake frozen over, Jarod and our group of friends have been ice fishing—a program that we’ve grown to love.

Recently, we received funding to start focusing on cognitive development. The Chester & Muriel Dawes Charitable Foundation has generously funded the “Full STEAM Ahead” program for the next three years. We are able to provide inquiry-based Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) learning opportunities for our K-5 students to spark interest in deepening their knowledge of STEAM topics and exploring STEAM careers. We will provide a wide variety of hands-on enrichment opportunities and experiments.

As we get started in February 2021, we will learn about bacteria. Using petri dishes, we will discover what we have on our hands before *and* after washing them. While we watch the bacteria grow with our new LCD microscopes, we will make our own jelly soaps to combat them. However, not all bacteria are bad! We will use good bacteria to make yogurt to eat as one of our nutritional snacks we have each day. A new topic will be focused on monthly; helping us explore the world we live in, discover new passions, and learn about amazing careers that result from STEAM programming.