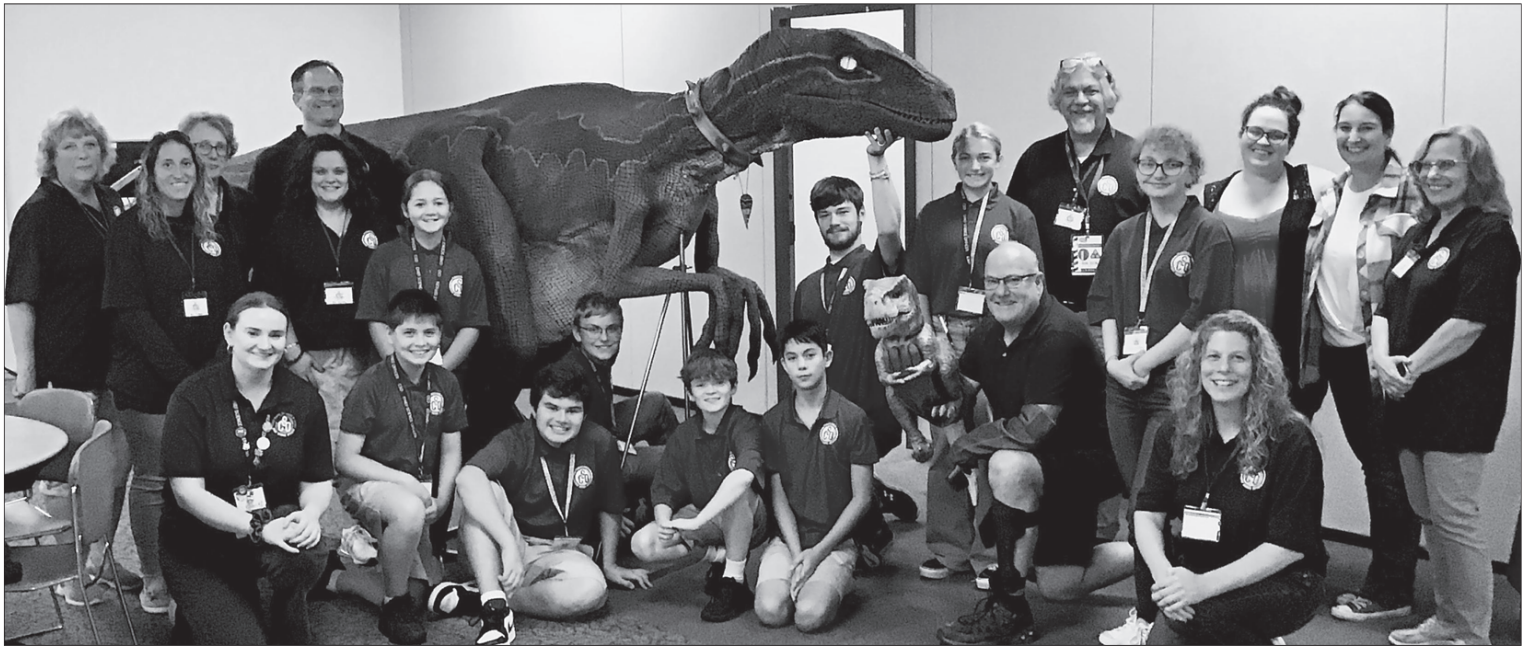

Photo provided

Chief Science Officers, student advisors and Central Susquehanna Ecosystem administration pose for a photo with Piper, a Pennsylvania Dinosaur during a two-day Leadership Training Institute.

Ten area students chosen to lead as Chief Science Officers

MILTON — Central Susquehanna EcosySTEM announces that students, Alejandro Bugarini, Gabriel Corrales, Raelyn Graff, Olivia Kelley, Brady Mason, Savannah Nixon, Zen Regus, Oliver Reidinger, Blake Rothermel, and Zander Tallent, have been selected to represent the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit 16 region as Chief Science Officers (CSOs) through the statewide STEM in PA initiative, the Chief Science Officer program.

This internationally recognized program is designed for students in grades 6-12, fostering leadership and innovation in the field of science. The Central Susquehanna EcosySTEM cohort is composed of 10 talented students who were selected by their school district for their exceptional dedication to science and leadership potential.

Our CSOs, both passionate about science and dedicated to making a positive impact in their school and community, attended a two-day Leadership Training Institute (LTI) as part of their CSO journey. The event brought together students and their advisors from Line Mountain Area School District (advisors: Heather Kieffer and Kam Traugh), Milton Area School District (advisor: Natalie Myers-Easton), and Saint Joseph's School (advisor: Kurt Eck), creating a dynamic network of young leaders who are eager to shape the future of science education in the Central Susquehanna region of Pennsylvania.

During the LTI, these students actively participated in various leadership activities that encouraged teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills. They also took a personality test, gaining valuable insights into their leadership styles and how they can effectively collaborate with others.

During the first day of the LTI, students were introduced to the CSO program's core concepts and the importance of becoming STEM ambassadors within their school districts. They honed their public speaking skills, engaged in leadership activities, and had the privilege of learning from Brandon Brown, Science in Motion Educator, allowing them to gain valuable insights into DNA, building a bead necklace/bracelet symbolizing their specific phenotypes and holding their own extracted DNA. After lunch, all participants embarked on a Commonwealth University, Bloomsburg campus tour, led by university student guide Makayla Miller, providing a glimpse into the world of higher education and scientific exploration.

On the subsequent day, the students created their CSO accounts and delved into the program requirements, setting the stage for their upcoming initiatives in their districts. Before lunch, all participants had the privilege of learning from four community STEM professionals, John Zaktansky and Doug Fessler (Middle Susquehanna RiverKeeper), Sam Shea (PMF Industries, Inc.), and Brian Houser (PPL Electric Utilities), allowing them to gain valuable insights into their education and work experiences. They then were partnered with a STEM professional and worked as a team to design and compete in the Marble Run Challenge. In the afternoon, students were surprised with a visit from Piper, a Pennsylvania Dinosaur imagined, designed, and produced by Mackenzie Wertman, founder and owner of Pennsylvania Dinosaurs, LLC. She shared her story of how her tribe of 15 (and growing) life-like animatronic dinosaurs with realistic features such as moving and blinking eyes, six different roars, and sharp teeth came to exist.

Perhaps most importantly, during the Leadership Training Institute, the CSOs began laying the groundwork for their action plan for the upcoming school year. As Chief Science Officers, they will be working closely with their peers, teachers, and administrators to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education within their school district and local community. Their vision, creativity, and commitment to excellence will undoubtedly drive positive change and inspire their fellow students and community members.

The Chief Science Officer program is an internationally recognized initiative that empowers students to become advocates for science education, bridging the gap between the classroom and the broader community. By fostering leadership skills and promoting collaboration among young science enthusiasts, the program helps create a new generation of scientists and leaders who are poised to make a lasting impact.