

EDUCATION

# It's science vs. zombies at Central

In survival mode, students take a lively approach

BY JON POMPIA  
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

It was a blue-hued emergency at Central High School on Friday, as the long-dreaded zombie apocalypse finally reared its decaying head.

Fortunately, science and ingenuity combined to save the day.

And the students.

Code Blue: Zombie Day provided 75 middle schoolers from throughout Pueblo the unique and entertaining opportunity to apply STEM principles as a way to survive, and then escape, a zombie-infested island.

Under the direction of Central STEM educators, five cleverly named teams — The Waddling Dead, Grateful Undead, The Running Dead, Zombie Meow and The Uncatchables — visited hands-on stations to learn such life-preserving skills as dodging epidemics, the proper way to camouflage, building a flotation device and creating a water filtration device.

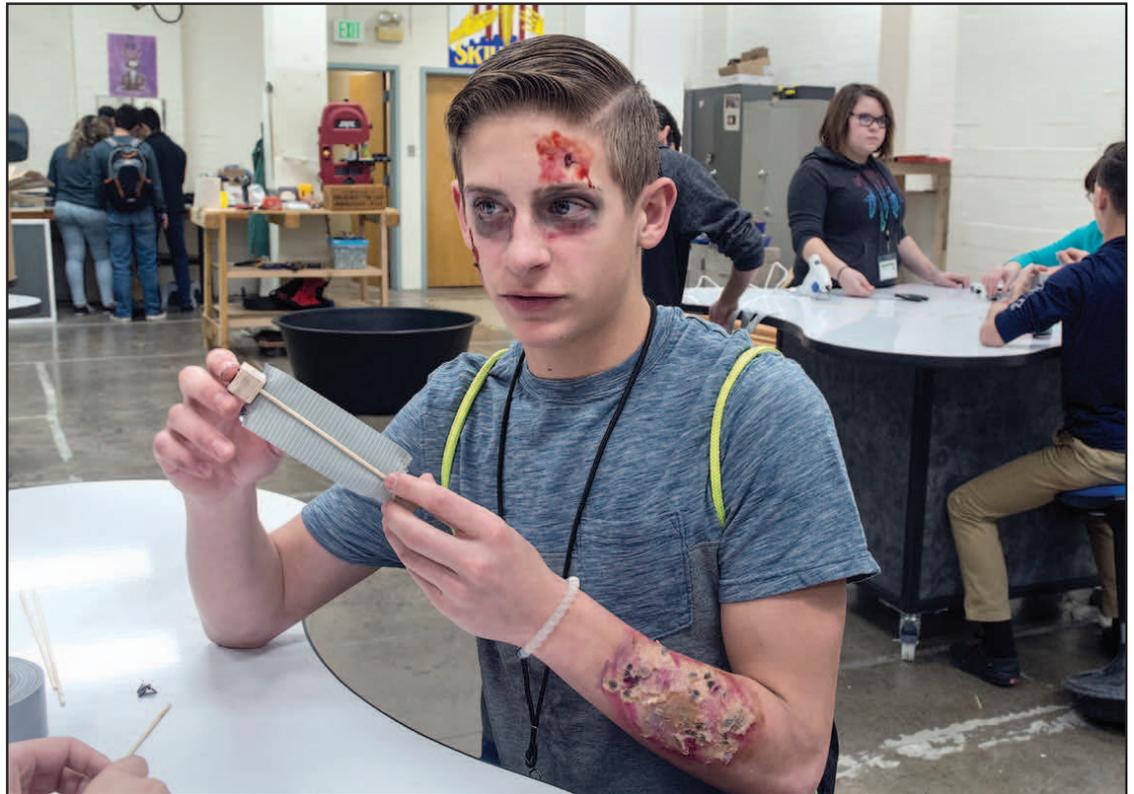
Through it all, Marissa Spratt directed students as they created a public service announcement on the proper way to avoid zombie contamination.

Well, cold and flu germs, actually — but nonetheless very useful information.

“We wanted to catch kids’ attention and expose them to STEM, what it feels like and what it looks,” said Morganlee Kempf, a STEM science specialist with Pueblo City Schools (D60).

And on this day, STEM looked like rotting flesh and horribly murky water.

“Make the wound look more infected. Use the red makeup” instructed Melissa Waller, as youngsters went about fashioning realistic looking gashes.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES

Luke Guarienti, 14, a student at Corwin Middle School, takes part in the STEM Day Code Blue: Zombie Day activities at Central High School on Friday. Luke was building a flotation device to get off an island.



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MORGANLEE KEMPF  
STEM SCIENCE SPECIALIST

“You want the zombies to think you’ve already been infected so they leave you alone.”

The artistic aspects of the zombie camouflage station, Waller explained, actually expands STEM into STEAM by allowing students the chance to “practice integrating the science of gelatin with the artform of the theater.”

“In the case of a zombie apocalypse, you will need drinkable water,” said instructor Jamie Withnell in a nearby station. “So what we’re doing today is building a water filtration system.”

With just a plastic bottle and filtering items such as river rock, pebbles, sand, cotton, coffee filters and yarn, the students were tasked with converting disgusting-looking water into something, well, palatable in a pinch.

“All the students said they would drink their water if they had to,” Withnell said, attesting to the success of the undertaking. And the key to clearer water?

“Cotton balls,” said Malia Marcovecchio, an eighth-grader at Pueblo Academy of the Arts. “They help break everything apart and get the nasty stuff out. It was cotton balls

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first, rocks, then more cotton balls, pebbles and a coffee filter with a hole in it.”

In the event of a zombie apocalypse, or for that matter an outbreak of flu, it’s vital to protect the body from an invading virus. At Chris Warren’s epidemia station, such was the focus.

“What we’ve learned is that sneezes are pretty much the nastiest thing in the world,” said Emily Williams, also a PAA eighth-grader. “But for me, sneezing into your hand

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isn't as protective as sneezing into your elbow — because that catches all your particles.”

For added security against the flesh-eating ghouls, Central JROTC cadets escorted team

members from station to station.

The students were welcomed to the science-driven survival exercise in appropriation fashion, namely a costumed recreation of the “Thriller” video

dance with live vocals, staged by the Central show choir.

With the issuance of team “survival ratings” — Zombie Meow led the pack — capping the day.

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