

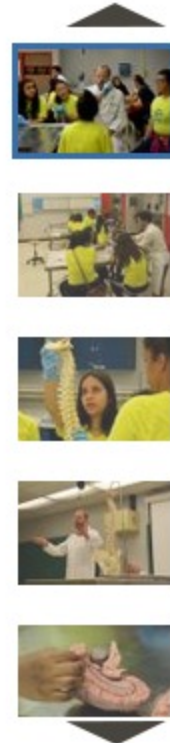
PRESS RELEASES

UPCOMING EVENTS

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

DEPARTMENTS

## EIGHTH GRADERS HAVE SCIENCE ON THE BRAIN AT GUMC



*Dr. Bill Rebeck instructs a student to follow his finger with her eyes as he explains how the brain controls eye movement.*

▶ PLAY SLIDESHOW

MAY 11, 2015 — It is common for students on the East Coast to take a class trip to the nation's capital. It is less common for them to inspect a human brain when they get there.

On May 8, eighteen eighth graders from New York City's Connelly Middle School of the Holy Child paid a visit to GUMC and did exactly that. With the help of *Bill Rebeck, PhD*, and several neuroscience PhD students, the middle school students learned about the human brain in the most authentic way possible — by inspecting one up close.

### UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

Rebeck focused the lesson on identifying what parts of the brain are responsible for different functions. The students divided into small groups and were asked to identify some of the functions that the brain controls, such as senses, movement, thought or breathing. Then, Rebeck and his team used real brains to show the eighth graders exactly where those things are controlled.

"I also make sure they all hold the brains," said Rebeck, "because I think that teaches something about the fragility of the brain. And that leads to a talk about the protections, mainly the skull and vertebra."

Why should eighth graders be learning about brain functions? According to Rebeck, it's not necessarily about pursuing a career in the sciences.

"I can't imagine how many of those kids will go into science," said Rebeck, "but what I actually care about is that they are not afraid of science and that they understand people's enthusiasm for science."

As it turns out, science can be scary for eighth graders — especially when "science" is in the form of handling a human brain.

"At first I was definitely scared," said Prescilla Jimenez, "but once I got the hang of it I was like 'Oh my god this is awesome!' It was a great opportunity because I probably won't do it at any other time."

At least one student plans to spend a lot of time in the lab in the future.

"I think this is a really fun experience, especially for me because when I grow up I want to be a forensic scientist," said Hiliana Arroyo, "so I kind of just had a glimpse at what I want to do."

### GIVING BACK

An all-girls school, Connelly Middle School of the Holy Child "champions girls at risk, empowering them to realize their full potential from middle school through college and beyond." This is the third year that Connelly Middle School students have come to GUMC to learn about brains with Rebeck.

"Georgetown is a Jesuit institution," said Rebeck, "so of course reaching out to underserved kids is a no-brainer."

But there is more to it than Jesuit philosophy. As the director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience, Rebeck believes that encouraging students here to give back to their communities is invaluable.

"My students should be feeling like this is part of their responsibilities. It will be their responsibility as PhD graduates to be reaching out, whenever possible, whether it is to a classroom or to a friend whose parent had a stroke and doesn't understand what happened," said Rebeck.

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