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TOP STORY

Students present stars to KV school board

By Heather VanDemark Correspondent Mar 4, 2019

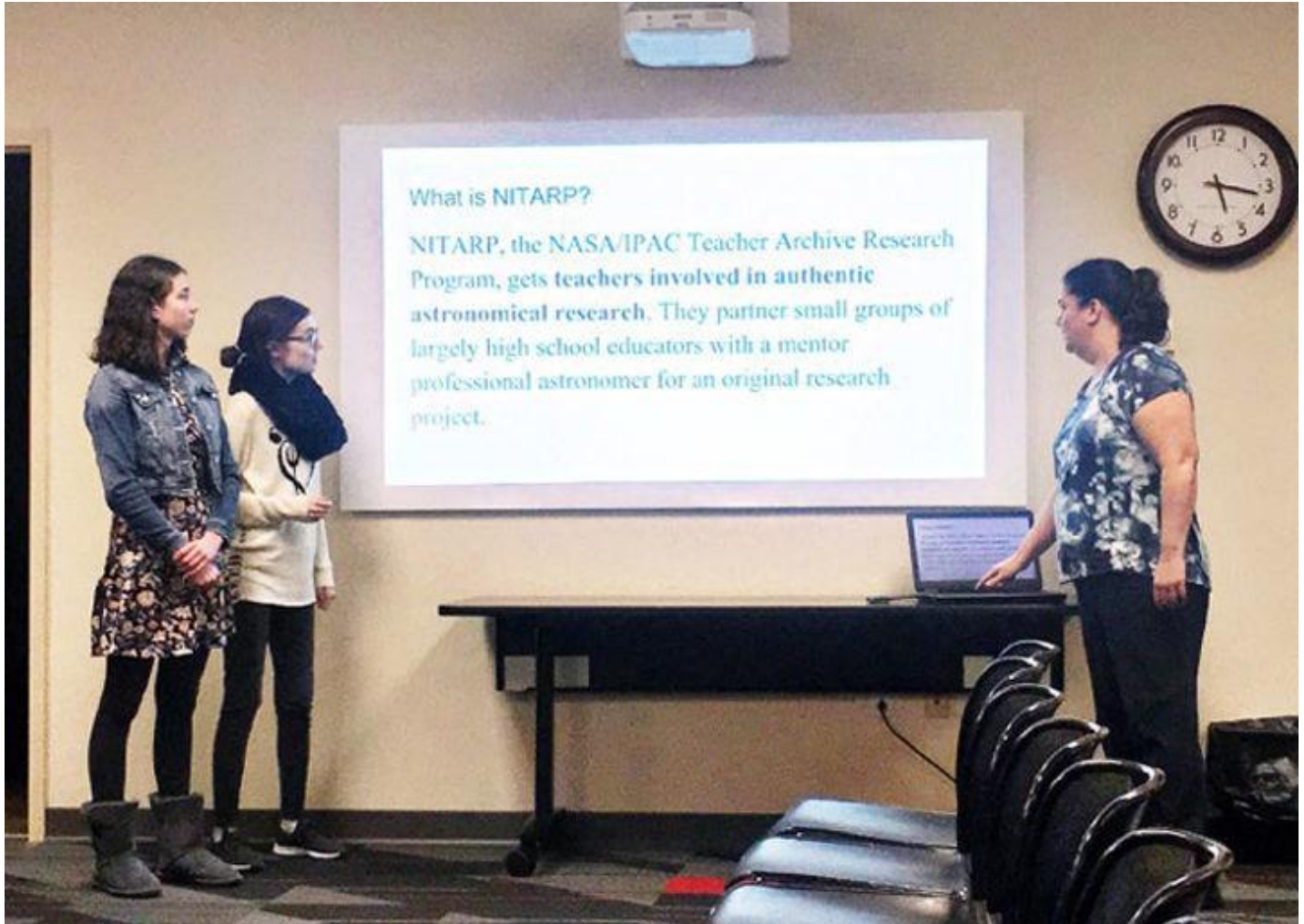


Photo by HEATHER VANDEMARK

KVHS students Skylar Nannenga and Brianna Coster, and their teacher Nancy Coster, give a presentation about their experience in finding undiscovered stars at a special program through NASA.

Photo by HEATHER VANDEMARK

WHEATFIELD – A Kankakee Valley school teacher and two of her students may get credit for the discovery of three previously unknown stars, if the information they found gets published.

Students Skylar Nannenga and Brianna Coster, along with their teacher Nancy Coster, told the Kankakee Valley School Board about their experience with NITARP, the NASA/IPAC Teacher Archive Research Program, which gets teachers involved in authentic astronomical research.

The program partners teachers with a mentor professional astronaut for an original research project. The educators then incorporate the experience into their classrooms and share their experience with other teachers.

About 100 teachers applied for the program and less than 10 percent moved to the interview stage. Nannenga and Coster said although they were excited, they were also terrified for their teacher when she was selected.

Student selection started out with a notification to the science club and the current/future AP physics students. A class was set up to have students watch background videos made by Dr. Luisa Rebull.

When it came time to do the work, only two students watched all the videos that were provided — Nannenga and Coster, and they were chosen as the student leaders. They studied the galaxy, space dirt and young stars. The extensive research they did was the first step. They flew to Pasadena, Calif., last July for a one-week training session at the California Institute of Technology.

They compiled their research and found three young, previously unknown stars in the L1688 region, also known as the Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex, one of the closest star-forming regions to the solar system. If the information they found gets published in an academic journal, they will get the credit for the findings.

Nannenga and Coster said they were both appreciative of the experience.

“It was an experience of a lifetime,” Coster said.

Both girls plan to attend Purdue West in the fall. Nannenga will major in aerospace engineering and Coster plans to study speech language pathology.

In other business, interim superintendent Iran Floyd said the KVHS band and orchestra participated in state competition and brought home numerous gold medals.

Also, the board approved a request for Jim Pint as the volunteer baseball coach for the 2018-2019 school year. The board also approved the KVHS cheerleaders' field trip request to go the National Cheerleaders Association Camp in South Bend.

The board discussed and approved the following programs to utilize the schools' facilities: 12U KV Comets travel softball team to practice in the KVMS auxiliary gym five times in March and April; and Sorrowful Mother Church will be heating baked potatoes for its annual fish fry March 8 in the high school cafeteria.

Cheri Shelhart