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Center Hill shares on WatchKnowLearn.org

Physics students create class act online

By Toni Lepaska

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A recent successful rocket launch by a Center Hill High School physics class is already on a video-sharing website for the world to see.

Important selections of the lesson were edited for a video clip that is now part of a directory of more than 27,000 free videos on WatchKnowLearn.org.

Patterned after Wikipedia, WatchKnowLearn got its start a few years ago in Hernando as teachers submitted videos for posting. As more and more teachers provided clips of classroom and lab work, use of the website exploded.

"This is a free resource," said Joe Thomas, chief executive officer and managing editor of WatchKnowLearn. "It's teachers helping teachers."

Teachers in Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentina and China use the videos. One day last week, the site got 65,000 views. Selections available include proper body and hand positioning for second-grade handwriting lessons, working with fractions, and a cartoon cat singing a lively song listing U.S. presidents in order of service.

Most of the videos are three to five minutes long and are used to introduce a concept or trigger a discussion, said Kerry Matthews, director of training, senior editor and former Center Hill Elementary fifth-grade science teacher. Matthews taped the Center Hill High physics class with its rocket project.

"I used a lot of videos to introduce concepts," Matthews said of her teaching days. "We need to keep stimulating these children with technology."

WatchKnowLearn officials plan to index more than 50,000 educational videos by the end of this year. To accomplish that goal, WatchKnowLearn is trying to get more teachers involved.

Thomas, 54, of Collierville, who is an organizational psychologist, is packing up his family -- a wife and five girls -- and taking WatchKnow Learn on tour to spread the word.

Leaving this month, they will ride from city to city across the country in a 40-foot-long recreational vehicle wrapped in an advertisement about WatchKnowLearn. They will be on tour for a year and visit schools and educational groups.

WatchKnowLearn is funded by a Memphis philanthropist's profits on St. Charles Place shopping center, Thomas said. The money goes to the nonprofit Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, which in turn funds WatchKnowLearn.

Thomas has already been making the rounds in the RV in Mississippi, visiting Biloxi, Corinth, Tupelo, Jackson and, of course, DeSoto County schools.

George Loper, principal of Center Hill High, said he had not known much about WatchKnowLearn, but his teachers have been abuzz about the website.

"They're excited about an opportunity to get videos," Loper said.

"Most teachers are excited about learning from good teachers ... to find better ways to serve their students."

SEE THE VIDEO:

The video of the rocket launch is at watchknowlearn.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=33783



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