

Enrichment program aims to make science exciting

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WEST LONG BRANCH — “The Stars Challenge,” a nonprofit enrichment program offered to middle school students who excel in math and science, is now taking applications for its winter semester courses at Monmouth University.

Started in 2006 by a Rumson couple, retired scientists Stephen and Margaret Ann Chappell, the purpose of the program is to foster science and math skills in academically gifted middle school students.

Stephen Chappell said the program sprung from a realization the couple made while studying at Rutgers University and traveling to China — that the U.S. is at a severe disadvantage for science, math and technology students.

They were particularly struck by the book, “The World is Flat” by Thomas Friedman, Stephen Chappell said.

“You read the book and say . . . we are in deep trou-

“Margaret Ann said, ‘You know we have Huntington, Sylvan and Kumon (learning centers) for kids who need help, what have we got for really bright kids to get them excited about science?’ ”

— *Retired scientist Stephen Chappell, remembering a comment made by his wife, also a retired scientist*

ble, if we don’t get our act together and get more people into science technology and math,” he said.

The influx of people training to take math, science and technology positions, hailing from countries like China, India, Russia and South Korea, will block out the much smaller number of American students studying in those fields, he said.

From there, Margaret Ann Chappell wondered what they could do to combat that problem.

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According to the program’s Web site, the hands-on course selections include a forensics class for sixth-graders, a seventh-grade offering titled “Is it Science or Magic?” which discusses chemistry, a seventh- and eighth-grade course titled “Explore the Universe!” — giving students a chance to study astronomy, and an eighth-grade course titled “Explore, Imagine and Build!” which discusses the laws of physics.

Tuition for each course is \$500, and courses begin the week of Jan. 11, according to the program’s Web site.

Online applications and course descriptions can be found at www.starschallenge.org.

The deadline to apply is Dec. 18.

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