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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Press Release



Photo caption: *Top left: R2D2 visits with students from Georgetown Elementary during the morning session. Top right: Stephen Dackin, Department of Education and Workforce Director, talks with students from West Union about their projects. Bottom left: Lieutenant Governor Jim Tressel chats with students from Western Brown about the wearable droids they built. Bottom right: Ohio Code Scholar kicks off at SSCC to celebrate over 700 students and their accomplishments with the Ohio Code Scholar Program.*

Southern State Hosts Third Annual Ohio Code Scholar Event

On Tuesday, May 13, 2025, Southern State hosted the third annual end-of-year celebration for students, faculty, and staff involved in the Ohio Code Scholar (OCS) project. This event culminated the program's hard work in southern Ohio, supporting the Ohio Code Scholar (OCS).

OCS was launched to spark creativity, resilience, and technical skills through computer science. Thanks to support from the state of Ohio and the advocacy of Senator Shane Wilkin, it is not just about coding skills; the program is working to build futures in STEM.

It all started a few years ago with a vision and 75 mini domes, to now a full-on coding crusade across the region. In year one, seven schools joined the adventure against the backdrop of Star Wars and featured student creations of dome projects. It was nothing short of an amazing culmination of student learning and engagement in technology. Year two turned up the dial with nearly 330 battle bots coded to perform battles and navigate obstacle courses from 13 schools. Today, in year three, the program has officially gone full droid mode, with over 700 wearable droids built by students from 17 different schools, including Adena High School, Chillicothe Intermediate and Middle School; Eastern Middle School, Fayetteville Middle School, Georgetown Elementary School, Hamersville Middle School, Pickaway-Ross CTC, Southern Hills CTC, Unioto Elementary, West Union Middle School, Western Brown Middle and High School, Whiteoak Middle School, Zane Trace Middle and High School.

Throughout the day, students enjoyed hands-on presentations from world-class presenters, including:

- **Douglas Bickert:** An Astrotech Droid Builder from Ohio who has participated in droid-building panels at multiple Star Wars celebrations and other conventions, and his creations have been utilized in various franchise movies.
- **Rick Prince:** A special-effects makeup artist who has designed and created characters worldwide. Rick rose to international prominence on the Syfy Network's competition series Face/Off and has written several feature film scripts.
- **Tim O'Sullivan:** A retired military officer with 21 years of active-duty service, Tim medically retired in 2013. Upon retiring from his military service, he found the therapeutic tasks of 3D printing, 3D modeling, building droids, and creating movie-related props. Tim's award-winning cosplay characters have placed in the San Diego Comic-Con and the Star Wars Celebration.
- **Joey Arielle:** An Exhibit Fabricator for COSI, Joey volunteers for various charity cosplay events, including portrayals of Loki and Rocket Raccoon from the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Chewbacca from Star Wars.
- **Rich Granger:** Managing Director of Workforce DriveOhio, Rich manages workforce development programs from Pre-K to PhD to prepare Ohio's talent for transportation jobs of the future, including drone pilots, battery manufacturing technicians, automated vehicle engineers, and more.

The day wrapped up with encouraging words from special guest, Ohio's Lieutenant Governor Jim Tressel, followed by an awards ceremony honoring those who placed first, second, and third in a variety of categories, including Best of Show.

Other special guests in attendance included Mike Duffey, Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and Stephen Dackin, Director of the Department of Education and Workforce.

Southern State is looking forward to an even bigger event next year.

To learn more about Ohio Code Scholar or your K-12 institution participating, please contact Dr. Joshua Montgomery at jmontgomery@sscc.edu or Amy McClellan at amcclellan@sscc.edu.

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