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1-17-2024

## **Dr. Jennifer Firestine Shares Knowledge with Spark! Students at Danforth Plant Center**

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January 17, 2024

Lindenwood University Senior Professor of Chemistry Dr. Jennifer Firestine has been working with high school juniors and seniors from the Parkway and Rockwood School Districts in the Spark! program for the last year.

The Spark! program provides high school students with dynamic, immersion-based student-learning experiences to ensure they can understand and respond to an ever-changing world, according to its website. To accomplish this task, the Parkway and Rockwood School Districts actively engage and work collaboratively with business partners, community service, and educational leaders to design and develop mutually beneficial learning experiences based on the interests of students and stakeholders.

Spark! is an example of how business, community, and public education can partner to produce learning experiences that educate the workforce of the future. Firestine's involvement in Spark! allows her to further educate the community and her Lindenwood students the opportunity to interact and share their knowledge with high school students.

When Firestine's son got involved in Spark! last year, she became a guest speaker with the program – often sharing her knowledge and wisdom about chemistry and other scientific topics.

Firestine's role with the program expanded in 2023. In October, she served as a guest speaker at an event at the Danforth Plant Center – an independent, not-for-profit research institute dedicated to plant science – in Creve Coeur. Then, in November, Firestine hosted Spark! students on Lindenwood's campus. During their visit, students met with Lindenwood students majoring in chemistry, toured the science labs, and observed a class while it analyzed an accelerant. Firestine again visited Spark! students in December and conducted a hands-on instrumental science lab.

"I don't have much experience with analytical chemistry, but it is a very important skill for my students to learn," Spark! bioscience teacher Meredith Jacques said. "I really appreciated having Dr. Firestine walk us through a lab that I could not have done with my students on my own."

Each time Firestine meets with students in the Spark! program, she shares first-hand knowledge of studying science in the real world. She also answered students' questions about Lindenwood, different majors, and college in general. Firestine's work with Spark! students aligns with Lindenwood's value of "we put students first" because she shares her wealth of wisdom and assists both her Lindenwood students and those in the Spark! program.

"I enjoy speaking with young scientists as they figure out what career path is best for them," Firestine said. "This experience is as much fun for me as I hope it is for them."