



John Kenny/Progress

**SCIENCE EDUCATION** – Cross County eighth grader Chelsea Dickens works with ASU scientist Kevin Keen on completing simple and parallel circuits in Jennifer McFarland's science class.

## ASU scientist visits CCHS weekly

By John Kenny  
Staff Writer

**CHERRY VALLEY** – Change and innovative ways of teaching have been seen in action over the last few years throughout the Cross County School District. In an effort to continue to build the cur-

riculum the school offers students, Cross County has embraced a new program for the 2009-10 school year.

The "Land use, land cover and biodiversity in Mississippi Embayment," funded by the National Science Foundation has put a program together at

Arkansas State University at Jonesboro to benefit schools in eastern Arkansas.

"(The) program was developed based on Environmental Sciences Graduate Program faculty research addressing

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regional biodiversity across ecosystems and organisms," a statement based on the program stated.

Eight doctoral Fellows are placed in five schools in east Arkansas every year, and Cross County High School is one that has hosted Kevin Keen on a weekly basis.

"It is a whole lot of fun, the kids make it enjoyable

ASU resident scientist Keen said. "(It) pays us as an outreach tool and gives us money to spend on tools and buy lab supplies and other means. It is another form of funding the labs."

Keen has an undergraduate degree in wildlife ecology and management, and is working on his master of arts in biology with an emphasis on environmental

ferent science experiments the students are able to do with the program.

"When we were covering circulatory systems, I brought in fathead minnows or Frys," Keen said. "We put them under a microscope and with them being so small, it allowed them (students) to see a circulatory system.

"(There is) a lot of material I can bring that we have access to at ASU that

they don't in public schools."

Keen also added that he was able to bring in collars used to track birds.

He said that he placed them in a field and allowed the students to find them with radios, illustrating how birds can be tracked.

"I also brought in bat specimens and when we were working on color adaptation, I brought in a polar bear hide," Keen said.

The new program may offer students new tools and ways to study science, but it has other advantages as well.

"A lot of it is providing extra funds for smaller groups of students to get more hands on with the activities," science teacher Jennifer McFarland said.

McFarland, as well as Melissa Moore, are both mentor teachers of the program.

The program is designed to provide the residents with an opportunity to improve their skills in communicating to a broad audience, while improving their understanding as well.

Another goal is to "peak student's interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and STEM careers while exposing an enriched STEM environment," the statement reads.