

# KENOSHA NEWS

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## Local firm helps KTEC students learn computer coding

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A Kenosha technology company is helping students at the Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum get a leg up in computer science.

Seventh- and eighth-graders at KTEC are meeting after school two days a week for six weeks for Coding Club, learning the language of computer coding and how to put it to work.

Michael Polzin, chief executive of Leeward Business Advisors, a technology and consulting company, and several of his employees and consultants are volunteering their time to teach the students coding.

Polzin said he met KTEC's Kristen Kief through a business networking event in town. He was impressed when he heard about the Kenosha Unified charter school's program and offered to help. At first, he said, the company volunteered to help with the annual Hour of Code event. Hour of Code is an international initiative to encourage students to learn about computer coding.

When that went well, he said, he suggested expanding to a Coding Club that would allow interested students to go deeper. "We wanted them to get a real-world experience," he said.

Kief said the school is grateful for the company's commitment, which also includes the possibility of future internships for students. "Leeward is one of the first community businesses that has really stepped up as partners in hands-on experience," she said.



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KEVIN POIRIER

KTEC students Jan Clyne and Sydney Anderson listen to a presentation by Leeward Business Advisors, whose chief executive helped encourage the school to start the club.



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KTEC student Fiona Lindsay asks questions during a coding club meeting. The club grew out of the school's participation in the Hour of Code international education initiative.



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Leeward Business Advisors CEO Michael Polzin speaks to KTEC students during a coding club meeting.

Leeward encouraged the 14 students in the club to come up with an application they could use — something they could use code to create. Club members decided they wanted to create a computer game that would help kids practice spelling in a fun way.

When it comes to spelling, "There is this one application that our school makes us use that we all hate," said eighth-grader Dylan Mahant. The kids hope the game they are building in coding club can be used for spelling practice instead. In their program, kids will be able to spell words to move characters through the game "We are hoping that the other kids will have to go through the pain that we've suffered and that then we can give them a better experience than we've had," Dylan said.

Seventh-grader and club member Ian Clyne said he had done some simple coding in the past. "I wanted to go further into the coding universe," Ian said. "It's basically the bare bones of all the technology we use, and I thought it would be cool to see how the games that I use function."

Dylan said he joined because he hopes to work in technology in the future. "I've always wanted to be a programmer or just deal with coding, so when this opportunity presented itself I was right on it," he said.

Polzin acknowledged that leading the club is a big commitment for his company. But he said it presents an opportunity to encourage students to think about technology as a career, and to help them better understand what it means to be in the workplace.

"I hired people who have graduated with computer science degrees," Polzin said. And while those graduates understand the technology, he said they often don't understand how to employ it in a work setting with coworkers and clients. He thinks helping young kids think about working on problems with their classmates will make them better workers in the future.

"We've been very impressed with how the students have worked as a team and how they have connected with the core concepts," Polzin said.



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KTEC instructor Kristen Kief looks at a computer presentation with Isabella Turner during a coding club meeting led by Leeward Business Advisors, a Kenosha firm.



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Leeward Business Advisors CEO Michael Polzin and Dylan Mahant look over a computer presentation during a coding club meeting.