

Wildcats in the World: Alysse Winkelmann '21 at UNH STEM Discovery Lab

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After starting her college career at the University of Missouri, Alysse Winkelmann '21 transferred to UNH Manchester to pursue a [degree in neuropsychology](#). The sophomore dreams of a career in neurological disorder research or child therapy—but for now, she's sharing her passion for science with elementary school children in the [UNH STEM Discovery Lab](#). Below, Winkelmann documents her experience with these elementary school programs, which are made possible with generous support from the Norwin S. and Elizabeth N. Bean Foundation.

Since I transferred to UNH Manchester, I've wanted to dive into as many opportunities as I could find. I stumbled upon a position at the [STEM Discovery Lab](#) to work with Manchester school students in afterschool programs and was fascinated by the lab's goal to inspire kids about the sciences. I was thrilled when I got the job and couldn't wait to start.

I've been focused on math and science since I started school. My dad, who has a job in a STEM field, loved doing science experiments with me and my siblings, a tradition he carries on with my 7-year-old brother. I love that I can share my passion and pass this love of science on.

Each week, about 30 kids from the Manchester YMCA and 21st Century Community Learning Centers visit the lab to learn about various science-related topics. I keep the kids organized (making name tags, taking attendance, etc.) and the most important part... provide snacks. I can describe every day in one word: crazy! But, it is so much fun.

Not only do the kids learn new things, but sometimes I do too! We've completed activities in marine biology, coding and zombie art, a program that teaches anatomy through art projects. The kids are engaged and excited about science. My favorite part is that they ask questions. There's nothing better than seeing a child get involved in their project and ask for help when needed.

My goal is to interact with every child in the programs, especially those who are on the shy and quiet side, as I was the same way at their age. One girl spoke only when I talked to her at the beginning of the program. Now, she talks to me any second she can. I enjoy seeing the kids brighten up when I talk about how amazing their projects are or if I can take a picture of their creations. And now they're asking me to take photos because they're so proud!

It is especially important for girls to take up an interest in STEM. I was astounded when I saw the attendance sheet on my first day. More than half of the children there were girls! It warms my heart knowing this is inspiring girls.

It has been an honor working in these programs. I get to not only share my passion with the children, but watch as their fascination for science grows. I love watching them giggle with each other or concentrate and collaborate when a project gets tricky. I also sitting down with a child as they tell me what they're doing or ask me for help because they know I'm there for them. It feels so good knowing I'm able to help children get excited about science.



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