



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2022

CONTACT: Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

Fontana Unified Bio Animatronic Students Receive Prosthetic Arm Demonstration

FONTANA, CA – Fontana High School Bio Animatronic and Neuro Prosthetic students got a glimpse of what is possible when imagination meets science on March 13 after receiving a visit from a children’s author whose life changed when animatronics specialists at Garner Holt Productions created a realistic, fully functional prosthetic arm for her.

June Durr, a former San Bernardino-based marketing consultant, told her story accompanied by Garner Holt, the founder of the animatronics firm, relaying how a chance visit to the studio 19 years ago netted her a new arm and a new lease on life. Dubbed “Lefty,” the prosthetic arm is made entirely of silicone and is layered and textured to look realistic, replacing the bulky, awkward prosthetic Durr was wearing.

“This young man, Garner Holt, took a look at my arm and told me he wanted to replace it with something better,” Durr said. “Garner changed my life with his talents, skills, and kindness. Now he is excited to make a change in the lives of Fontana High students by introducing you to new ideas that will change lives in your community and around the world.”

Through a partnership with Garner Holt Education Through Imagination, FOHI Health Science and Medical Technology pathway students learn the basics of human anatomy, body movement and mechatronics in a state-of-the-art bio-animatronics lab, where they are using engineering machines, laser cutters and 3D printers to design their own life-like models, including artificial limbs.

“I started my company when I was 17 years old, in my parent’s garage,” Holt said. “That’s what inspired this space, all the kids who have toured our studio and left with a smile on their face, saying they wished they could work here someday. I say to them to keep focusing on your art and STEM studies and eventually you may also get a job in this industry or the medical profession.”

Durr lost her arm in 2002 to a rare form of cancer called synovial cell sarcoma, which afflicts less than 25 people a year. At the time, Durr was told she only had three months to live. Durr, who lost her mother when she was eight years old and was raised in a foster home, took the same tenacity and sense of humor that had gotten her through tough times and applied it to her life-threatening predicament.

“A sense of humor is a great coping tool,” Durr said. “I know you can move on with your life. You can do things you didn’t think you could do. It’s your choice how you live and accept things.”

With her original prosthetic arm, Durr noticed that people with disabilities were treated disrespectfully by others. Fitted with a Garner Holt silicone arm, Durr was inspired to write an illustrated children’s

book, “Grandma’s Amazing Arm: The Adventures of Malia Mouse,” which she hopes can be used as a primer on how to treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect.

Durr’s story resonated with FOHI senior Carina Juarez, who is considering careers in both bioengineering and nursing. Juarez said she appreciated the opportunity to receive insight on how people with disabilities live and is excited to be learning skills that can assist them in their day-to-day lives, combining science and resourcefulness.

“I love the creativity and trial-and-error process of bio animatronics. We’re able to be as free as we want to be and use our imaginations to find solutions,” Juarez said. “I am really enjoying our latest project, which is designing animatronic birds. Using the laser cutters and 3D printers, shaping, modeling, it’s a little of everything we’ve learned in the class so far.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_GARNERHOLT: Fontana High School Bio Animatronic and Neuro Prosthetic students received a visit from author June Durr and animatronics creator Garner Holt on March 13. Holt designed a state-of-the-art replacement prosthetic arm for Durr in 2003, using techniques that FOHI students are currently learning in their animatronics lab. From left to right: FOHI senior Miranda Ordonez, Holt, Durr, Superintendent Randal Bassett, and FOHI Principal Ofelia Hinojosa.

###