

# UNH's Ada makes a visit to Bailey students

By Susan Misur

Special to the Voice

The guest instructor stood quietly in the back of a Bailey Middle School classroom last Wednesday morning, waiting

for the next period to start and taking in her new surroundings.

Ada, who was visiting from the University of New Haven, remained subdued even

as students filtered into the room, giving only one-word greetings to the wide-eyed, excited middle-schoolers. But that didn't hamper the youngsters' enthusiasm for her pre-

sentation that day.

That's because Ada is a robot.

University of New Haven graduate students Devon Clark and Daniel Walnycky and UNH Elder Family Endowed Chair and Director of the Cyber Forensics Research and Education Group Ibrahim Baggili brought Ada to Bailey STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and computer students for National Engineers Week, which was celebrated across the country from Feb. 21-27. Bailey offers a half-year STEM course with teachers Jeanne Vauiso and Cynthia Messina to its seventh- and eighth-grade students to give them a glimpse of what they can learn in West Haven High School's more extensive STEM classes.

Clark created Ada, named after a woman who many consider to be the first Eng-

lish computer programmer, to help teach others about cyber security, including how people can prevent their online accounts from getting hacked, how to choose strong passwords, and ways websites can transmit viruses to computers.

Ada the robot can tell if someone's email has been hacked, give weather reports, quiz users on cyber security, give tips cyber security tips, tell jokes, and read aloud news articles on cyber security.

"This was the first time we've brought her to a local school for a presentation," Clark said. "But she's been out at UNH events like Homecoming, and the goal is to encourage other schools to build a robot like Ada for themselves by downloading our program and putting their own spin on it."

Clark told students about the coding and program that en-

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Photo courtesy of Susan Misur

A Bailey Middle School student interacts with Ada, a robot that was built by University of New Haven graduate student Devon Clark and helps others learn about cyber security. A tablet computer attached to Ada's "arm" allows users to take a quiz on cyber security, hear Ada give tips for staying safe online, or see if their email account has been hacked.

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able Ada to respond to questions and search online databases, and that users can interact with her verbally and by using a tablet computer attached to one of her "arms."

While Ada is advanced in the technological area, her appearance is simple: A second tablet screen sitting atop a metal pole is considered her head, which swivels every few minutes and shows a pair of blinking eyes. Her arms and barebones "outfit" are blue and white panels created from a 3-D printer.

Students had a chance to take photos with Ada, ask her if their email has been hacked, hear jokes, and test out her cyber security quiz function.

But Bailey students didn't only hear about Ada and the work it took to create her. They also learned about other types of robots, such as driverless cars, as well as the ethics of using robots in different industries.

"It was a great experience for our STEM and computer students to see some real-life application. It promoted interest in studying engineering and technology fields in the future," Vauiso said. "We hope to continue building on our partnership with UNH and to bring additional higher education experiences to our students."

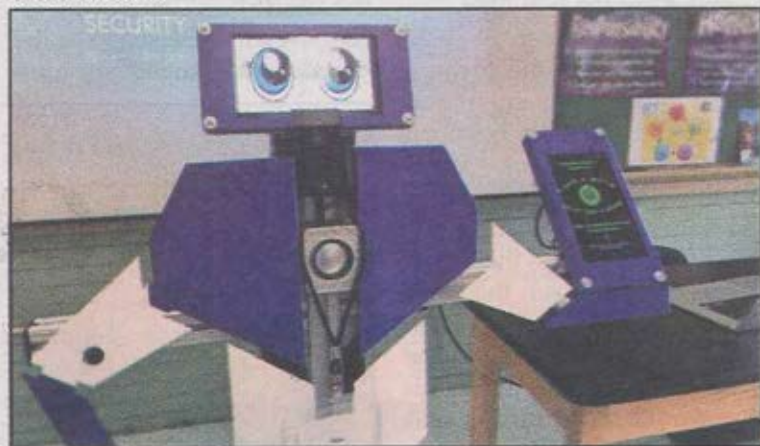


Photo courtesy of Susan Misur

Ada the Robot visited Bailey.