

## HCHS's Brett Roark completes Naval Academy's STEM program

Harlan County High School student Brett Roark recently participated in the United States Naval Academy's STEM Program.

The program, highly competitive for admissions, is designed to encourage rising freshmen through juniors to pursue a course of study in engineering and technology throughout high school and college. The program focuses on science, engineering, technology and mathematics.

Student selection is based on numerous requirements, but student accomplishments inside and outside of the classroom are key.

Joining about 300 of his peers from across the country, the program was held at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

Roark said the week-long camp exposed participants to a variety of different programs.

"We worked with electric circuits, aquaculture, light waves, aerodynamics, and others," he said.

The camp focuses attention on participants by testing their problem-solving, creativity and collaboration skills.

"I had a good time. I learned a lot," he said. "First we were exposed to basic things, but then as we moved on it became more and more advanced."

Roark said that in addition to being introduced to the Naval Academy College, the program concentrated on exposing participants to the different fields of engineering.

"My stay at the United States Naval Academy was very enjoyable and extremely insightful into the numerous careers that the fields of engineering have to offer," said Roark. "I had the opportunity to meet many different people from an expanse of backgrounds in my short, yet meaningful, time there."

Students worked in lab facilities which provided a unique learning environment outside the traditional classroom. The camp offers predominantly hands-on learning.

Forbes magazine ranks the Naval Academy as the top public college in the country. U.S. News and World Reports lists the undergraduate engineering program in the top five.



As an eighth grader, Roark won the regional MATHCOUNTS competition sponsored by the Pine Mountain Chapter of the Kentucky Society of Professional Engineers. It is held annually at the Middlesboro campus of Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College. The competition featured schools from Harlan County, Bell County and Harlan Independent.

He was selected and participated in the Center for Rural Development's Rogers Explorer program, another highly competitive honor. It is an intensive three-day, two-night program focused on cultivating skills in leadership, technology, math, science, and community service. It is developed, coordinated, and supervised by The Center for Rural Development in partnership with University of the Cumberlands, Lindsey Wilson College, Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Asbury University, University of Pikeville, and The Center's newest partner, Union College.

Roark is a member of the HCHS Black Bear Football Team.

He is the son of Brent and Kris Roark of Pineville, and the grandson of Mary Faye Roark of Pathfork, the late Jim Roark, Robert and Ann Smith of Hulen, and the nephew of Naomi Craig, Pathfork.