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Radford University's CSAT STEM Club presented at the USA Science and Engineering Festival. The festival took place April 16-17 in Washington, D.C.

Along with the members of the club, members of Radford Amazonian Research Expedition (RARE) were invited to go.

The booth had a theme of Arctic to Amazon. They showed demonstrations of erosion, let people pretend to be polar bears, try on the shoes of arctic explorers, and had giant hissing cockroaches for people to hold.

The USA Science and Engineering Festival had many science exhibitors that included colleges, industries, and government agencies like NASA.

The CSAT STEM Club was the only exhibitors that had something for people to hold and interact with. The Madagascar Hissing cockroaches let the club become one of the more popular booths at the festival.

Erin Dudley, who has a cockroach outreach program called Roachzilla, took the cockroaches to the festival to share what Radford is doing with them.

The cockroaches are used to create waste to fertilize the food that is grown here that is used in the cafeteria.

"It was really great to go on this trip, because I got to talk about application of our cockroaches and what we're doing at Radford University with our food waste at our cafeteria and how we're actually growing our own food for our cafeteria off of the waste," Dudley said.

For many of the people that went on the trip this was the first time they dealt with the cockroaches.

Holly Rindorf, a member of RARE, helped Dudley with the cockroaches even though she had never

dealt with them before.

“There weren’t many people who wanted to help handle them, so I was kind of like ‘okay, I can help.’ I’d never held them before that was my first time actually doing them,” Rindorf said.

Elise Roell, another member of RARE, also helped with the cockroaches.

“I was holding them and we’d let kids or adults or anyone who wanted to hold them basically just tell them about the research we did,” Roell said.

The kids that went to the festival seemed to love the cockroaches. They could hold them and let them crawl on their hands and arms.

While most kids were excited to hold them, some were a little more reluctant to do so, but they eventually warmed up to the cockroaches.

“One little boy, for instance, he talked for a while with me, watching it crawl around my hand and my arm, and asking me question. Then he finally said, ‘will you help me hold it?’ So I kind of put my hand under his little hand, the roach crawled over my hand then crawled over his hand and his face just lit up,” Rindorf said.

This was an opportunity for kids to get a life changing experience and to help create a love of science that would hopefully follow them throughout their life.

“A lot of adults were telling us stories about when their little ones were like two and they held the roaches at the Natural History Museum, and they all had stories from when they were little. I was talking to people about it and you remember these things and think back to what got you into science,” Dudley said.