



BOBCATS KNOCK  
OFF LONGHORNS AT  
HOME IN EXTRAS

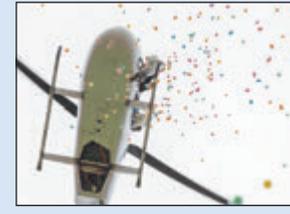
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EMPTY BOWLS  
PROJECT

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EGGS FILLED WITH  
GOODIES FALLING  
FROM THE SKY

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# San Marcos Daily RECORD

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## SAN MARCOS LIBRARY

# Professor teaching children code from 'Scratch'

RACHEL WILLIS  
STAFF REPORTER

Professor Sean Justice of Texas State University will be offering two free coding workshops for children and their parents at the San Marcos Public Library.

Children ages 9 to 12 and their parents will learn the basics of Scratch together. Scratch is a free, online, child-friendly coding program which can be used to build actual programs and games. It also teaches basic understanding of coding principles and theory in a fun, interactive way, using puzzles, graphics and sounds.

Justice likes to teach code in a hands on-way and describes using code similar to using clay — you can talk about how to use clay or the consistency of clay, but you won't understand clay until your hands are in it.

"A lot of people think of coding as being a completely sort of separate domain that takes a huge amount of expertise or that has a very particular sort of need-based reason for learning it, rather than as something as friendly or as playful as clay," Justice said. "The purpose is to get everybody's hands into the code and to make something."

Before Justice became an educator in the Art Education School of Art and Design at Texas State he worked in the commercial art industry. His work primarily involved photography and graphic design, but as computer capabilities became an integral part of his industry it became essential for him to understand it. He started working with code outside of the commercial arts and began using them in his personal life to create puzzles, interactive designs and animations.

Justice will be using Scratch,

developed by the MIT Media Lab, to teach the principles of coding. Scratch is used by teachers from elementary to higher education to introduce code and computer science in a creative and social way. While the target audience is children from about 3rd or 5th grade through middle school, Scratch is used by kids and adults of all ages to make stories, art, games, puzzles and countless other things.

The workshops are free, but children are required to be accompanied by a parent or primary caregiver to create an open discussion between parents and children about technology and social networking. Justice believes there is a divide between children and parents concerning technology because children have learned technology organically by engaging with it from a young age and adults have not had that ability.

"What I really want is for adults

to understand why these materials, code as material, are so engaging for children today," Justice said. "The kids figure this stuff out because they play with it like kids have always played with materials, they play with clay, play with paint or play with baseballs. As a child we just play and engage with materials and I don't think coding is all that different."

Coding has been shown to have benefits including helping children develop problem solving skills, encouraging creativity and logic. It also helps build a base for further learning and valuable future job skills.

For this workshop, the library will be utilizing 20 Chromebooks that they purchased with a \$4,000 grant from the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC).

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## CODING FROM PG. 1

The Chromebooks have been used for a variety of programs including computer classes, financial education classes, teen programming, social media workshops, GED and ESL needs and now will be used for family literacy coding.

The workshops will be held April 1 and 8, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the

San Marcos Public Library. Space is limited for the programming class, participants must register in advance by calling 512-393-8200 or online at sanmarcostx.gov/libraryregistration. Both workshops will cover the same content, participants need to only sign up for one session.