



Robot shop in Ann Arbor teaches children vital skill

826 Michigan expands tutoring program into Detroit, plans to open second robot store

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. -

It is a store front with all things robot, however, this store is doing more than entertaining kids, it's helping their education.

The Liberty Street Robot Supply and Repair Shop in Ann Arbor uses robots, robot food, and other cyborg items to lure children and their parents into the store.

"We have this other way to engage with

the public. When people walk by our store, it doesn't look anything like a writing and tutoring center when you are just walking by. It looks like something very weird and different, it looks like a robot store. That causes people to open the door and question and be curious. And that almost puts people in the state of mind where they are opened to new things," said 826 Executive Director Amanda Uhle.

[826 Michigan](#) is a writing and tutoring center that serves students six through 18 years old. The nonprofit company focuses on student literacy to help students succeed in school and life. They currently assist about 2,500 students in Washtenaw County. 826 Michigan also expanded into Detroit this year.

The Liberty Street Robot Supply and Repair Shop exists for a greater purpose than just profits. The money made when people purchase an item in the store is used to help children become better writers. The money goes to tutoring the children, holding workshops for the students, and even help the students go on field trips.

"The most important thing is it just helps students, especially students who struggle with that concept of getting help, it helps them feel amazing about coming here. So instead of feeling that I'm going to school after school feeling, they get to come to the robot store," said Uhle.

Behind the robot store are tables, computer stations, and a lot of books. 826 Michigan is an ideal setting for children who need a helping hand.

With 2,000 volunteers, 826 Michigan is also helping teachers in the classroom.

"Teachers tell us that they know what they want to do and what needs to happen in their classrooms, but they don't have enough help and enough time to get it done." said Uhle.

Earlier this year volunteers began working in three Detroit schools and during the summer months, children at the Franklin Wright Settlements in Detroit are benefiting from the 826 Michigan volunteers.

Those students in the summer program at Franklin Wright Settlements are given a variety of writing assignments including writing a letter to people or objects they could not normally engage.

"I actually wrote to my Auntie Leene." said 11-year-old Maliky Woodford. "Because she actually passed and I wanted to give her a letter saying that I loved her."

Woodford's list to write letters to included President Barack Obama, Rick Snyder, Dave Bing, Spongbob, and Michelle Obama.

Woodford says the writing workshops have made him more confident for school.

"It will actually make me go up to the classroom and read to them more," said Woodford.

"I think just helping them to realize that writing can be enjoyable and it doesn't always have to be sitting at a desk in a quiet classroom," said 826 Michigan intern Elizabeth Callen.

826 Michigan measures student success by more than just improved grades or test scores.

"What we really want to change is students engagement in school and their confidence levels and how they feel about themselves, particularly themselves as writers," said Uhle. "Because I think when a student really feels confident and able to write then they will take a chance and they'll try to fill out a job application fill out a college entrance essay."

The students at 826 Michigan did not just write the letters, they will get a chance to see them published.

"But to write your ideas down and to formalize them and finish them into a published format and then to see that someone else usually our staff or interns or volunteers have taken their words and ideas and made them into something different, a publication a real book that's available to the public is just incredibly powerful," said Uhle.

826 Michigan plans to keep expanding into Detroit, and even open a robot shop in the city over the next year.

If you are interested in volunteering for 826 Michigan, [click here](#).

To check out the Liberty Street Robot Supply and Repair Shop online, [click here](#).



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