





Big Cypress children place their hands on a wall while a thermal imaging camera held by a Seminole Tribe of Florida Fire Rescue Department firefighter detects only their body heat.

BIG CYPRESS — Playing cops and firefighters with real police and fire rescue personnel is fun for boys and girls in Big Cypress.

“I just like everything I get to learn,” said Akira Cabral, 10, during a recent Seminole Police Department Explorer Program meeting with the Seminole Tribe of Florida Fire Rescue Department.

The Jan. 27 afternoon class featured a hands-on lesson by SPD Officer Michele Harbin about traffic stops and a show-and-tell of fire equipment from firefighter/paramedics Lt. David Coosaia, David DeCardenas and David Smith. Most children were younger than age 12.

First, Harbin lined up chairs to serve as vehicles and placed children in the front seats as a driver and passenger. She approached the car and proceeded to request identification and explain why the car was stopped. Children took turns playing police and drivers.

Next, firefighters demonstrated how to use a thermal imaging camera (TIC) to detect the presence of life behind a curtain. The camera is an important rescue tool in cases when fire victims are knocked out from smoke or buried under debris and unable to call for help.

Children wrestled each other for spots against a wall where they pressed their hands and bodies before stepping back to see the camera reveal their heat print.

“For young children, the technology behind the machine is not as interesting as how cool it actually works. Mostly, we want them to understand what we do,” Coosaia said.

Akira was already Googling “TIC” to buy a heat reading camera on Amazon.

“It’s probably the coolest thing I’ve ever seen,” he said.

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