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When children build for real clients: A summer filled with collaboration, creativity and community



(<https://miamiherald.typepad.com/.a/6a00d83451b26169e201b8d2a6ad7b970c-pi>)

By Tom Pupo and Daisy Nodal

Each Summer, we host our Summer S.T.E.A.M. maker camps that engage kids in hands-on projects exploring Design Thinking, Electronics, Sustainable Design, and more. But this Summer, to make the impact even greater, we partnered with various organizations and local small businesses to provide real-world challenges that the kids would design and build solutions for. It was uncharted territory for many

involved, but it ended up being an incredibly rewarding experience! These two projects put the power of community transformation in the hands of children—of course, with the help of a committed team of local makers!

Urban Hacking Camp

We partnered with Learn 01, Mano Americas and Codella to create the ultimate maker camp experience: a real-world sustainability project, built in our community, incorporating both physical and digital skills, and inclusive to all kids using fund-raised scholarships.

There were 5 project categories that the kids could choose to join. The groups were tasked to collaborate, design, develop, and build their own visions for improving the Smartbites Community Garden + Cafe. They learned how to use power tools, design software, and digital fabrication technologies to build corn hole games, outdoor tables that grow spices and herbs, art pieces made of recycled plastics, sensors that monitor moisture levels in the soil, two vertical farming systems, and more!

It was a transformative experience, for both the kids, the staff, and the team of MDCPS high school Summer interns who were also learning and assisting during the whole process. They learned by *doing*, by manipulating materials, looking things up online for reference, and testing their ideas with prototypes. These are the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. You can see their incredible work by visiting SmartBites (<http://smartbitestogo.com/>).

The Mobile Reading Pod

Our Design Thinking camps usually use imaginary characters as clients. But this year, thanks to The New Tropic, the camp had a real client – The Miami Book Fair! Their task was to design an installation that would travel to different neighborhoods, provide a nice place to sit and read, dispense free books, and promote literature. The kids dreamed up all sorts of fantastical technologies like giant drones that deliver books, autonomous library vehicles, etc. but the panel of judges chose one winner – The Mobile Reading Pod by 9-year old Allen Hasbun.

With the help of his family and our staff, Allen spent the next month at Moonlighter refining his design and building his creation in full scale! He learned how to use the various software and fabrication equipment in the space and actively took part in every step of the process, never shying away from the work involved to realize his vision.

It debuted at The Wynwood Yard and will travel to the Miami Book Fair in November. Allen also intends to open source his design. When given the tools, skills, and resources to build, you'll be surprised what kids are capable of building – and of the impact they can have on their community. By empowering future generations, we can build an innovative maker city!

**For the full article and photo essay, visit www.moonlighter.camp (<http://www.moonlighter.camp>)*

Tom Pupo and Daisy Nodal are co-founders of Moonlighter Makerspace (<http://moonlighter.co/>) in Wynwood.



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Startupbootcamp Digital Health

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