

# The ReSET Report

Chief Executive Officer: Harold Sharlin  
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## Pilot Project with Curiologie Adds Amazing New Brains to ReSET



Volunteer Leanora Hernandez and a Shaw student use their fingers to demonstrate how brain neurons communicate.

When Leanora Hernandez talks about teaching children hands-on science, the phrase that pops up repeatedly is: “it was really, really fun.” But she isn’t referring to fun for the children. She’s referring to fun for *herself*. It’s clear that Hernandez, a Cancer Training Research Fellow at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), gets as much—if not more—out of volunteering than her students do.

In fall of 2013, Leanora contacted ReSET Executive Director John Meagher about how to make her STEM outreach program “Curiologie in the Classroom” chartered and recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit organization. She had received an email about ReSET that provoked her interest. “Curiologie\* had just started up at Shaw Middle School in northwest DC,” shares Leanora. “And I was intrigued to learn more about a

program that had a long and successful history in the DC area. I quickly contacted John because I wanted to ‘pick his brains.’ He gave me information about logistics, volunteer training, obtaining permissions, even finding funding. John has been so helpful. He’s been a truly invaluable resource for me.”

John and Leanora chatted for about an hour, and the conversation turned towards a potential partnership

between the two organizations, which ReSET’s Board later approved as a one-year pilot project.

Curiologie provides 12 volunteers to Shaw students. The Saturday program is delivered to grades 6–8 at one time. “We usually have between 15 and 20 students,” says Leanora. “But some bring their younger siblings, who can be as young as five, so we tailor our discussions to different grade levels.”

ReSET is pleased to expand its reach to middle schools, harking back to its earlier days when sixth-grade students were in elementary schools. It is also helpful for ReSET to have a Saturday option for volunteers who are unable to accommodate a week-day schedule. Curiologie benefits from associating with an established nonprofit that understands the ins

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Dear volunteers,  
We love how you come to Barrett to do experiments with us! Please keep that going!!!

### A Banner Year!

School year 2013–14 was the first year that ReSET had more than 100 volunteers who provided DC-area children with hands-on opportunities in STEM learning. We are grateful to each and every one of our 117 volunteers.

### THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia for their financial support of ReSET programs provided through a Community Investment Fund grant. ReSET volunteers led 37 programs this school year in northern Virginia schools.

### Science Quiz Answer:

Tanning



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**The June 19th issue of the journal *Cell* reports on an addiction that mice can develop that reflects a similar aspect of human behavior. What is it?**

... See inside for the answer

*("Curiologie partnership ..." continued from front)*

and out of working in DC-area schools. ReSET provides financial support for classroom equipment and for field trips. In addition, Curiologie volunteers gain from participating in orientation and training sessions with more seasoned volunteers.

The expertise of the Curiologie/ReSET volunteers is phenomenal. Most have research experience in the biomedical sciences, with particular expertise in cancer research, neuroscience, and stem cell research. All of the volunteers have lab experience and many have a personal interest in the life and environmental sciences. Subjects they cover with the children give a rich introduction to various science disciplines, including human digestion, DNA extraction, microscopy, squishy circuits, natural selection, plant dissection, and physiology, to name but a few. One of their experiments at Shaw is on brains, and provides students a window into the kinds of work underway at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).



ReSET's and Curiologie's goals are so consonant you would think the two organizations were twins. "Like ReSET, we want our volunteers to make science accessible and fun, and to give children opportunities to be creative. We want our students to understand that science isn't just for 'nerdy' kids. And we also want to help them to consider career options in the sciences."

Leanora's motivation for organizing Curiologie echoes ReSET's mission: "I get most excited when I see our students gain confidence in their work and are just generally more curious about the world around them. Teachers are also seeing the gains from these Saturday sessions, because it is showing up in the students' regular class work. They are starting to think like scientists."

\*Curiologie in the Classroom is not an NIH-sponsored organization, nor is it endorsed by the NIH. It does not represent NIH and does not present itself as such.

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