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WINCHESTER, Va. – The Virginia National Guard hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Winchester STARBASE Academy July 23 at the Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center in Winchester. Students from Frederick Douglass Elementary School of the Winchester Public Schools took part in the first-ever five-day program that ended July 27.

Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration, or STARBASE, is a Department of Defense educational program, sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs where students participate in challenging activities in science, technology, engineering and math. Students are immersed in a unique classroom experience for five days where all activities are student-centered, hands-on, encourage higher order thinking and incorporate STEM applications in the real world.

“This program is important not only for Winchester, not only for Frederick County, not only for Virginia, but for the entire country,” said Congressman Frank Wolf. “These are our future scientists and astronauts.”

Wolf explained that a study conducted by the National Science Foundation determined that fifth grade was the best time to reach out to kids to get them interested in science and math, so that is why the STARBASE program targets that particular age group. He stressed the importance of developing math and science skills in order to help the United States remain competitive with other nations throughout the world.

Just before the official ribbon cutting, STARBASE Program Director Susan Corrigan introduced her staff of three and explained the Eggbert activity the students would be demonstrating. In the activity, students had to try and construct a safety harness for an egg that would allow it to safely fly down a cable with the goal of protecting the egg at the end of the flight. Students had a budget for how much they could spend on the raw materials for the safety harness. The Winchester STARBASE Academy, sponsored by the Virginia National Guard and based in the Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center, will partner with public and private schools in the region with the goal of working with approximately 800 students in the first year. The full program will begin in late August.

Wolf also acknowledged the important role of the local Air Force Association in bringing the program to Winchester.

For more information, contact Susan Corrigan at 540-686-4964.

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To view photos from the event, visit:

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