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**MONTGOMERY NONPROFIT RECIEVES NSA STARTALK AWARD**



MONTGOMERY, AL – September 21, 2018 - For the first time in the Southeast, a nonprofit organization was awarded the prestigious STARTALK grant in the Korean Category. With Korean language programs in New York and California, Montgomery’s own Alabama-Korea Education & Economic Partnership (AKEEP) is the 5th Korean language recipient to be recognized for the 11-year existence of the program.

The grant proposal was submitted to STARTALK by Meesoon Han, Executive Director of AKEEP, to operate a 15-day, non-residential summer program from July 16th - August 3rd, Monday – Friday titled AKEEP-TROY STARTALK: Cultural Treasure Hunters. Hosted by Troy University Montgomery, Cultural Treasure Hunters recruited 24 elementary and middle school students from Montgomery and Pike Road schools. The program aimed to deliver engaging and dynamic language learning experiences for students and creates a pathway for certification in critical need languages that are not commonly taught for teachers in the U.S.

“For some of the kids who haven’t been outside of Montgomery, STARTALK has been an eye-opening experience. By broadening their minds, we hope they’ve broadened their perspectives as well.”

- Mr. David Koda, Program Operations

Cultural Treasure Hunters focused on making learning an adventure by allowing students to explore Korean language and culture in a learner-centered environment. Eligible special needs students were also welcome to participate as Special Education instructor, Mrs. Elisabeth Newell, facilitated alternative learning classes. Upon completion of the program students received graduation certificates and were recognized by Dr. Jim Purcell of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and Dr. Jeffery Langham of the Alabama State Department of Education.

1Ms. Sara Park uses art to teach Korean language and culture

Due to the success of the Cultural Treasure Hunters program and incorporation of special needs learners, AKEEP has been selected to speak at the STARTALK Fall conference in Houston, TX.

-*more*-



Mrs. Elisabeth Newell with special needs student, Seongmin Choi

**About AKEEP**

The Alabama-Korea Education and Economic Partnership (AKEEP) is a Montgomery, AL nonprofit acting as Global Partnership Facilitator for economic prosperity that provides education in global leadership and multicultural diversity. AKEEP’s works provide critical knowledge and services to improve the quality of life for students, professionals, and organizations while enabling these groups to take full advantage of the opportunities of growing economic ties between Alabama and South Korea. [www.akeep.org](http://www.akeep.org)

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