Young people gear up for Festival of Code

Young people are set to address real-world problems with self-taught hacking skills during the Festival of Code this summer.

Young Rewired's State's coding competition will take place from 28 July to 3 August, with the not-for-profit organisation supporting under-19s with the creation of websites, prototypes and inventive applications.

This year's Festival of Code is being supported by Google, American Express, The University of Plymouth, TalkTalk, Plymouth Council and The Met Office, among others.

During the weekend event, participants from across the UK will have the chance to present their designs to a panel of judges and meet their fellow coders.

Judges will include the likes of CoderDojo founder Bill Liao, and musician and judge on the Israeli version of American Idol Yoni Bloch.

There will also be a pop-up skate park, interactive graffiti wall and bubble football on-site, plus live music from The Virus Empire, Mizkai and J3wel.

On the first day, a number of speakers will address the competitors, including leader of the Hour of Code in the UK Avid Larizadeh, judge Yoni Bloch, and word artist George Mpanga – also known as George the Poet.

Emma Mulqueeny, CEO of Young Rewired State, said: "Young Rewired State's ambition is to find and foster every child driven to teach themselves to code and connect them to each other, and a community of mentors, to solve real-world problems through open data. The Festival of Code is our annual week-long celebration. It provides these young people with an environment that emboldens their passion for coding and programming.

More on IT skills

"It gives them a chance to work in partnership with their coding peers, learn from the experts and create new digital solutions to problems we all face. The week will be very hands-on, with plenty of data to get stuck into, as well as the chance to hear from some top speakers from across the industry.

"We can't wait to visit the centres this year and celebrate the nation's young coding talent once again – we are urging youngsters to sign up and join us for a week of fun, hacks and challenges."

Alison Cutler, Computer Science Education Outreach manager for Europe at Google, said: "We believe in using technology to do cool things that matter. Google's partnership with Young Rewired State is driven by the mutual desire for all students to have the opportunity to be the creators, and not just the consumers, of tomorrow's innovations.

"To do this, students not only need to be inspired to try it out, but also become part of a fun community to keep going with it, which is exactly what Young Rewired State offers. We are delighted to be supporting the Festival of Code this year, and wish the thousands of students at the event the best of luck and, more importantly, lots of fun."

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Chris Hunt, centre lead at i-DAT, which is the Festival of Code host alongside Plymouth University, said: "We're delighted to be opening the doors of i-DAT at Plymouth University this summer and host the Festival of Code. This really is a fantastic event, and an invaluable one in giving the next generation a platform to enhance their skills for the future and collaborate with the best in the digital industry.

"We look forward to seeing what projects come out of Plymouth this year and helping these talented young people in this exciting journey they're on."

The Young Rewired State's Festival of Code will be brought to the Solent region by Ordnance Survey, which has teamed up with The Cathedral Innovation Centre and Totton College.

Alison Cutler, Google

Totton College is one of more than 50 regional centres across the UK that will host four-day sessions for free. At the end of the festival attendees will present their ideas at a grand finale in Plymouth.

Participants from the local area will also have the opportunity to have tea at the House of Lords and a tour of Ordnance Survey's head office.

Clare Acklam, lead for The Cathedral Innovation Centre, said: "We're delighted to be collaborating with Totton College and Ordnance Survey to bring the Festival of Code to the Solent region for the first time.

"This is a fantastic free event, and an invaluable one in giving the next generation a voice and helping to harness their skills for the future."

Ian Holt, developer programme manager at Ordnance Survey, said: "I am looking forward to seeing the range of innovative ideas which develop during the week, especially those which include mapping and location data.

"This really is a great opportunity for teenagers to showcase their coding skills and I would urge anyone interested to register straight away."
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