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City schools students delve deep to map Mammoth Cave's waterways

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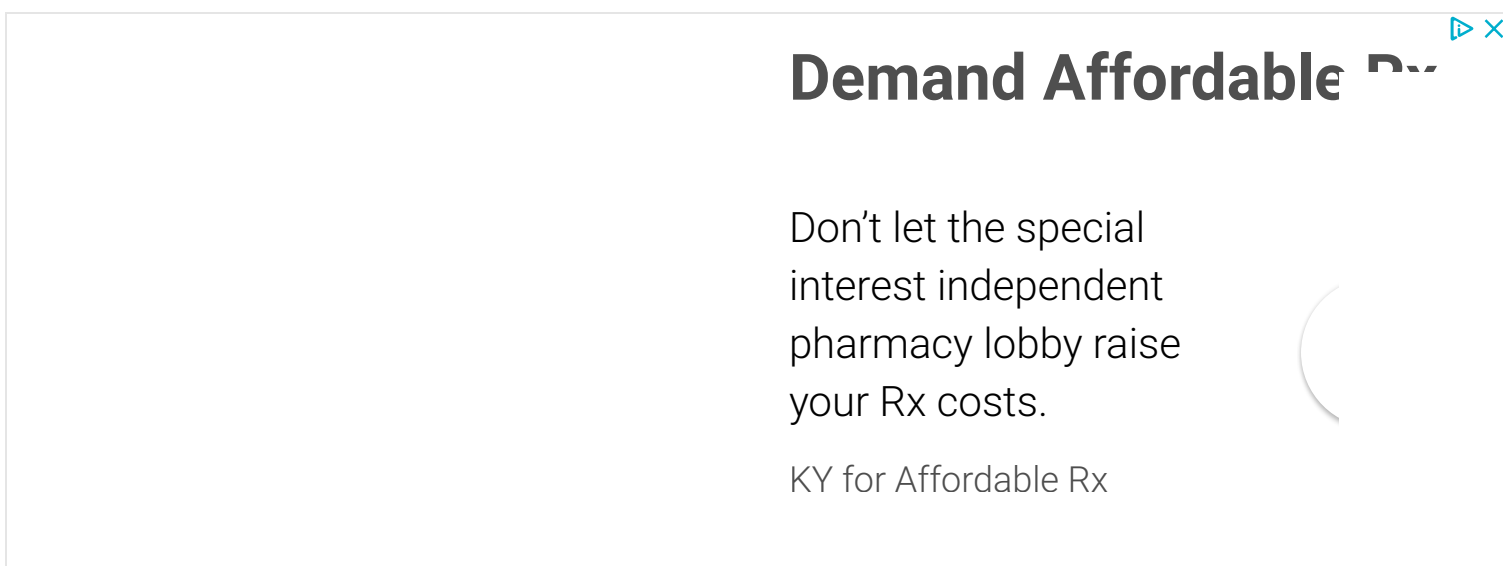


Students, Jennifer Nguyen and Elek Olson, from Bowling Green Schools make
(photo Chris Groves)

Submitted

Fastening on their hard hats and headlamps, a group of Bowling Green Independent School District students is delving deep to unlock the secrets of Mammoth Cave National Park's underground waterways.

The project, which was made possible by a partnership with the Crawford Hydrology Laboratory at Western Kentucky University, has students dumping water tracers like fluorescent dyes and salt solutions to map the waterways of Great Onyx Cave.

An advertisement for Demand Affordable Rx. The text reads: "Demand Affordable Rx" in a large, bold font. Below it, in a smaller font, is the message: "Don't let the special interest independent pharmacy lobby raise your Rx costs." At the bottom of the ad, it says "KY for Affordable Rx". There is a small play button icon in the top right corner of the ad area.

Demand Affordable Rx

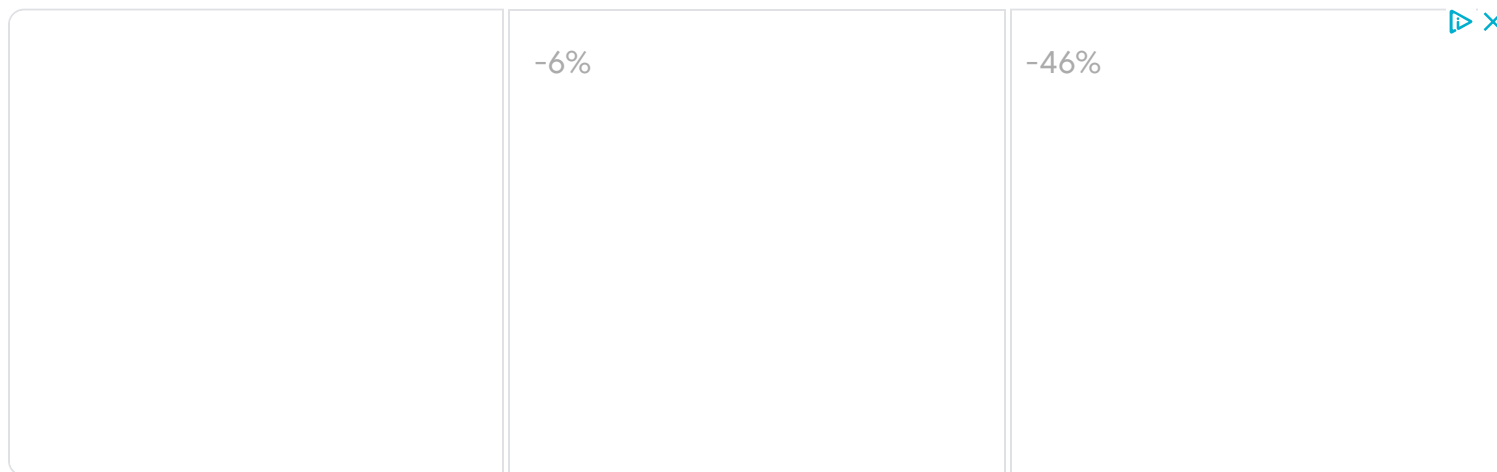
Don't let the special interest independent pharmacy lobby raise your Rx costs.

KY for Affordable Rx

“This kind of science is definitely attainable,” said Cristin Olson, a chemistry teacher at Bowling Green High School who acts as a mentor to the group of Science National Honor Society students. “A lot of students feel like ‘I’m not smart enough.’ ... Just getting them in the field to show them ‘Hey, you can do this.’”

“We mess up. We make mistakes. We learn from our mistakes, and that’s called science,” Olson said. “You don’t have to go out there and get it right the first time. That’s not the point. ... You get your hands dirty. You mess up, you try something new and you just build.”

The group of 11 students includes BGHS and Bowling Green Junior High School students. Through some serious spelunking and lab analysis, the students have connected a sinking surface stream at Three Sisters Hollow to the Lucy Kovah River in Great Onyx Cave.



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The team is also studying the subterranean Biz Falls as a tributary to the Lucy Kovah River. The students are set to present their findings at WKU's Undergraduate Research Conference next month, which is being held remotely this year.

Olson said the project has shown her students the real-world ways they can apply what they've learned in their chemistry classes while contributing to a project that will allow scientists to pinpoint pollution in the larger cave system.

So far, the project has yielded results that Olson said could sustain the project for years to come.

"Now we're looking at possibly three to five years, where we can just continue this research because every time we find something, it opens the door to something else," she said.

The BGHS students include Clay Kilgore, Maya Ganesh, Nasri Atalla, Cooper Correa, DongKyun Kang, Alisha Mullick, Lillian Groves and Jennifer Nguyen.

The BGJHS students are Elek Olson, Leah Groves and Elijah Olson.

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Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.