



# Visiting prof has lots of fun with science

He plays to packed  
lecture halls at USI

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Bassam Z. Shakhashiri doesn't have money to burn — he just makes it look that way.

He also enjoys blasting balloons into fireballs and changing the colors of brightly tinted liquids.

Science is fun to Shakhashiri and he's trying to spread his enthusiasm for science, chemistry, mathematics and education to others.

The professor of chemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison presented two performances of entertaining experiments Thursday to packed audiences at the University of Southern Indiana's Community of Scholars program.

Shakhashiri also is a former assistant director of the National Science Foundation who is best known to the public through his televised chemistry demonstrations.

Shakhashiri said he's trying to get young people interested in science, but "the more important goal is to see to it the population at large is literate in chemistry, science, technology, mathematics. That means having both an understanding and appreciation of what science is."

Behind the fun, Shakhashiri has some serious concerns.

"We must revamp the whole education system from K through 16," Shakhashiri said. "We need to make a 90 degree turn in what we are doing in this country. The whole system has to be restructured. If we don't make a 90 degree turn, I think very quickly we will become a second-rate power."

Educators are in the "talent development business" to help each individual fulfill his potential, he said.

"That's not what we do in our school systems now," he added. "We extinguish the flame of interest kids have not only in science but in all kinds of things. We're very good in our society not only in putting a wet blanket on, but killing that curiosity."

Courier photo by **DON GOODAKER**

Bassam Z. Shakhashiri has a burning interest in science.