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Girls Act as Science 'Upstanders,' Not 'Bystanders' at Stanford Stem Camp

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From left, top row: Ariella Zulch, Molly Mudgett, and Audrey Moore. Bottom row: Natalie Davis, Julia Moseyko, and Chun Che Free. Photo provided

The Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette (OML) branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) has granted a total of 53 scholarships to Tech Trek camp for local middle school girls over the past 16 years. This summer, six Lamorinda girls were chosen to attend the week long July, 2013 Grace Hopper Tech Trek Camp at Stanford University.

The 2013 LamorindaTech Trek camp scholarship winners were Chun Che Free and Julia Moseyko from Orinda Intermediate School, Natalie Davis and Audrey Moore from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, and Molly Mudgett and Ariella Zulch from Stanley Middle School. These outstanding students with a passion for science and math were selected on the basis of written applications and personal interviews, potential career goals, and their other outside interests. Potential career goals spanned a broad range of pursuits, including marine biologist, high-tech entrepreneur, mechanical or civil engineer, inventor, mathematician, and fighter pilot.

The camp was kicked off by an inspiring speech by former judge Ladoris Cordell, who challenged the girls to be "upstanders" rather than "bystanders" in life. After returning from the Stanford University science camp this summer, the girls spoke of fabulous "hands on" experiences including:

constructing a robot with sensors and programmable actions - like turning a figure 8 or slamming a golf ball - learning how to suture from a veterinarian; dissecting a squid; constructing balloon-powered and mousetrap-powered car models designed for long travel or for speed; extracting DNA from strawberries; and visiting the NASA history museum with spectacular auditorium views of the heavenly bodies.

OML Dorm Moms (and AAUW members) Gail Chesler and Jan Cushman kept very busy with the six OML campers and 16 additional girls from other districts in their dorm groups, facilitating the girls week so they optimized their learning and their adventure.

The girls also participated in Professional Women's Night - sort of like "speed dating" for the girls to meet and ask questions of 12 women with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)-related careers.

AAUW will be selecting another round of Tech Trekkers in the spring of 2014, and some of the 2013 girls may have a chance to return as junior counselors in 2016. For information about the AAUW-OML Tech Trek and Scholarship programs, visit www.aauw-techtrek.org.

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