

AAUW Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette STEM Conference at SMC

By Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen



Participants at the March 17 STEM Conference at Saint Mary's College. Photos provided

Examining a sheep's brain, noting the differences from a human brain, making slime, and getting creative with coding. These are but a few of the hands-on workshops that 200 middle school girls attended at the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Conference at Saint Mary's College on March 17. This was the third year the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch of the American Association of University Women presented the conference.

"It is important for young girls to meet other girls who have similar interests and passions. Together they can encourage each other and build a support network," Stacia Cragholm, conference co-chair explains. "The STEM conference is an opportunity to help middle school girls follow their dream by providing a sense of encouragement and empowerment to pursue their interests in science. I think by starting at this early age they might follow their passions and not get sidetracked."

To this end, 19 workshops were available to the girls, who attended three during the day. Along with the ones already mentioned, some of the others were: Minimizing the Effects of Climate Change, Learning to Design and Build Bridges, Field Day in the Fourth Dimension; Bottle Rockets: An Introduction to Aerospace Engineering; and one with the intriguing title, Affordable Housing for Gummy Bears.

While Audrey said she wanted to learn how to design a suspension bridge, Larkin thought that learning to disassemble and assemble a computer sounded like a good, practical skill. Rosie liked getting to act in the short film her group made.

Girls from 29 schools participated. Almost 60 girls attended from the Antioch School District. Ana Castro, adult supervisor said, "I enjoyed the opportunity to expose the girls to the college campus environment and have the opportunity to attend a wide variety of STEM sessions. It was an amazing trip. It was the first time for our district to attend this event. It is definitely something we will do again." One of the Antioch students said, "I liked the ability to choose different classes. It gave me the opportunity to explore several subjects to see if I liked them or not."

High school aged girls and young women from Saint Mary's College were engaged in the conference. Enthusiastic and dedicated young women involved in the branch's high school ambassador program develop their

leadership skills by assisting with conference planning, volunteer training, and coordination of logistics on the day of the conference. High school volunteers also serve as workshop aides at the conference. The high school girls have been past participants in the local branch's AAUW STEM-oriented Tech Trek summer camp (<https://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/stem-education/tech-trek/>), the Sister-to-Sister program, or have expressed interest in a leadership role. Isabelle, who volunteered in this capacity, said it was fun to see the day from a different perspective and she was glad to give back as she felt she gained so much from the STEM conference last year.

Orinda Council Member Eve Phillips gave the keynote address, with inspirational words about some of the personal stories that have helped shaped her life. Her example provided a success story of women in the world of science. Phillips is a Group Product Manager at Google, leading product strategy and development for its Chrome products in the workplace. Previously, she cofounded and served as CEO of Empower Interactive, Inc., a digital health company. She is a graduate of Miramonte High School, Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Phillips was elected to the council in 2014 and served as mayor in 2017.

The event was hosted by Saint Mary's College and its School of Science. Generous sponsors were Chevron, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary and Rossmoor Rotary Foundation. A conference of this magnitude required over 100 volunteers, including workshop leaders who are STEM Professionals, AAUW OML members, students from Saint Mary's College and local middle and high schools.

Parents were provided with a morning workshop with the theme, "Negotiating the Maze: How to guide your daughter through choosing her academic electives in high school and college to ensure academic and professional success in the pursuit of her dreams." The presenters included a STEM professional, a social worker, one of the high school ambassadors, and a Saint Mary's student intern.

The AAUW Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch is committed to STEM programs, and to developing the interests and self-confidence of young women. See the OML-AAUW website for more information: <http://oml-ca.aauw.net/tech-trek/>.



Kicks4Kids Athletic Shoe Drive to help 200 local under-resourced youth

Submitted by Christine Ayers



Photo provided

Level Up Sports Academy, a nonprofit youth development program in Contra Costa County, has launched its Kicks4Kids Athletic Shoe Drive, serving under-resourced youth ages 5-13 in Contra Costa County. Level Up is currently collecting new or gently used athletic shoes, as well as financial donations to purchase new shoes. More donations are needed to reach the goal of collecting and distributing 200 pairs of shoes to local kids in need.

Research shows that with good shoes, kids are healthier, attend school more often, and are more confident. "Having a good pair of shoes that fit right and look good not only boosts a child's confidence, it also removes one of the most visible signs of poverty", said Bill Flitter, Founder of Level Up Sports Academy. "This is a high impact

project that we're proud to lead for our local community."

Level Up created the Kicks4Kids campaign to provide much needed athletic shoes to youth in need. There will be a free shopping event for pre-registered youth on April 28 hosted by New Hope Community Church in Concord. Shoes will also be delivered to partnering agencies including Monument Crisis Center, Contra Costa Kops for Kids and more.

To schedule a pickup of athletic shoes or provide a financial donation, go online to <https://levelupsportsacademy.org/shoe-drive>. A Level Up athlete will contact you to schedule a convenient pickup time. For questions regarding the Kicks4Kids Athletic Shoe Drive, contact Christine Ayers at (510) 295-7298 or levelupsports2018@gmail.com.

Sharon Reichow Memorial Scholarship offered for middle school students

Submitted by Christine Kuckuk

For the 2018-19 academic year, The Saklan School is offering a \$20,000 scholarship to new middle school students in good academic standing who demonstrate a commitment to Saklan's mission of Thinking Creatively, Acting Compassionately and Living Courageously. This scholarship was

created in memory of Sharon Reichow, a Saklan teacher who inspired a generation of students to follow the school mission and who gave each of her students a solid foundation upon which to build a successful academic future. See saklan.org for details. Deadline for applications is Friday, April 27.

In Memory

Jay Milton Puckett

March 16, 1946 – March 10, 2018



Jay Milton Puckett, a real estate broker and longtime resident of Moraga, passed away on March 10, 2018, following a battle with Prion disease.

Jay is survived by his wife, Judy Puckett; his children, Jason Michael and Jennifer Elizabeth; and his brother, Wayne Gordon.

Jay was born in Hollywood, California, on March 16, 1946, the son of Margaret and Milton Puckett. He spent most of his childhood in

Oregon, where he attended University of Oregon. He was drafted and served in Vietnam, earning the rank of sergeant in the United States Army. Upon returning he worked for the Treasury Department as a sky marshal. Eventually, he enrolled at Southern Oregon University and graduated with a business degree.

Jay married Judy Rau on Aug. 17, 1975. They first lived in Northern California and later settled in Moraga to raise their children, Jennifer and Jason. Jay worked in both commercial and residential real estate. He enjoyed playing tennis at Moraga Country Club, where he met some of his dearest friends. He and Judy were able to travel often and enjoyed seeing new places. Jay was adept at befriending new people anywhere he went. As an avid cook, he loved to welcome people into his home for get-togethers and celebrations. Above all, Jay's focus was his family, and he raised his children in a home filled with love and compassion. His kindness, his sense of humor, and his spirit will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

A Celebration of Life in honor of Jay is to be held on April 21, at 4 p.m. outside the tennis lounge at Moraga Country Club. The address is: 1600 St. Andrews Dr. Moraga, CA 94556. The dress is casual.

Donations can be made to: "UCSF Foundation," on Check Memo Line: "CJD-MAC 7001950, in Memory of Jay Puckett." Mail to UCSF Foundation, Box 45339, San Francisco, CA 94145-0339.

We look forward to seeing you on April 21st to celebrate a wonderful, giving man, who loved his family, his friends, and life.

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