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AAUW Tech Trekkers thrilled by experiences at Grace Hopper STEM Camp

Submitted by Jan Cushman



Photo Sandra Fox-Sohner

Seven enthusiastic eighth-grade girls from Lamorinda who attended Tech Trek camp on the Stanford University campus in July were honored at a reunion and reception on Sept. 7 in Moraga.

Mary Conklin, Ella Easley, Marianne Eichmann, Jada Hembrador, Liesel Hilkemeyer, Isabelle Katz, and Maya Martono attended camp on scholarships sponsored by the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch of the American Association of University Women. The OML Branch has been sending middle school girls to Tech Trek camp since 1998, and to date, it has sponsored 86 girls.

The girls were delighted with their special experiences bonding with "like-minded girls" who love science and math and seeing their future in a variety of possible STEM careers.

Tech Trek math/science camp is designed to encourage rising eighth-grade girls to persist with their excitement about science, technology, engineering and math through high school, college, and into their careers. The program features numerous hands-on activities as well as a chance for the girls to make friends with other girls interested in STEM and to meet professional women in STEM fields.

This year, core classes at camp included computer coding and cyber sleuthing, as well as marine biology, CSI forensics, and aerospace engineering. At camp, the girls took apart computers, wrote computer code, dissected fish, went on a STEM hunt on campus, learned the physics of hand-made cars and went on field trips. They stayed up to midnight looking through a variety of telescopes and talking with engaging amateur astronomers. They "speed dated" to learn about the STEM careers of professional women, and learned about structural engineering and build structures using rolled up newspapers.

Some quotes from the girls: "This camp has been a fun, amazing and life-changing experience that I will never forget." "Thanks to this opportunity, I can leave with more confidence and an even greater love for STEM." "Continue to inspire girls like me to pursue STEM careers!" And "Tech Trek was one of the best weeks ever!"

AAUW-OML scholarships are funded through annual events, such as the Walnut Creek Restaurant Walk featuring 16 restaurants providing food from 6 to 9 p.m. on Oct. 9 or a paper shredding event from 9 a.m. to noon at 5A Rent-A-Space in Moraga (Cost: \$9 per file box).

For more information about Tech Trek, visit <http://oml-ca.aauw.net/tech-trek/>.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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