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Volunteer effort to engage girls in STEM bears fruit

Submitted by Ferenc Kovac



Amber Thompson Photos provided

Over the past year, with initial efforts by the Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club, a volunteer effort to engage girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities is bearing fruit.

With input from Moraga and Orinda school administration and technical staff, and volunteer efforts by Kiwanis, Girl Scouts, NASA Ames, and UC Berkeley College of Engineering faculty, staff, alumni, and students, three online events on the relevant topics of Cybersecurity Basics, Safeguards, and related Research and Applications are being offered.

Online enrollment is free to local Girl Scouts of America Service Unit 327 (comprising 60-plus troops and over 550 Girl Scouts) on a first come, first serve basis.

Shefali Goel, a current sophomore at Cal and Girl Scout Gold Award recipient, has played a key role in developing and now teaching the curriculum, and says, "As technological knowledge is becoming ever-important, I am passionate about sharing my love and introducing younger scouts to the fields of STEAM, to equip them

with the resources to be co-creators in society."

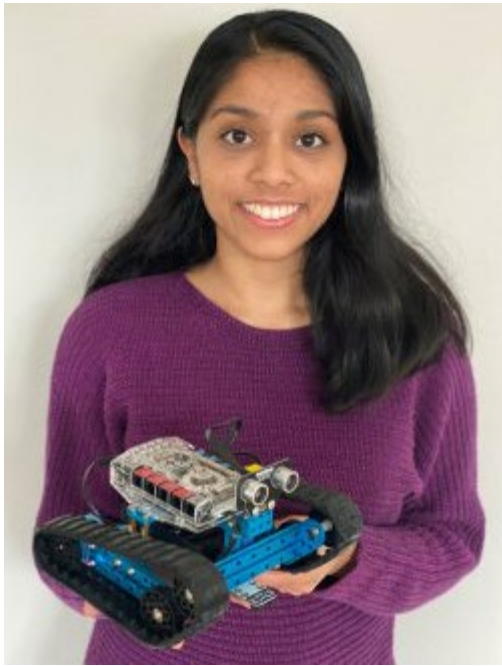
Craig Kovac, an electronic and computer engineer (Campolindo and Troop 212 alumnus) has also been contributing to the effort, primarily focusing on six additional badges dealing with robotics and programming. He will very soon be starting a new job on the East Coast, and Moraga Kiwanis is looking for more volunteers to work with the team to finish the development and implementation. Amber Thompson, an active leader with Orinda Moraga Girl Scouts says: "Community-building through robot-building? It's fantastic! We are thrilled to see Kiwanis' support for girls in STEM and excited to put these kits into the hands of Girl Scouts. The selection of this robotics platform will support skill-development and career exploration across multiple scouting levels."

As programs are developed and successfully completed by the first round of more senior Scouts, one of the goals is to provide them with the tools to step into the leadership role, and teach the younger Girl Scouts those same skills, thus keeping the cycle self-sustaining. Adult volunteers will stay involved to provide supervision, logistics support, and any needed updating of content.

Moraga Kiwanis is currently also hoping to expand its impact by inserting the "A" for Arts in the heart of STEM, and gaining "STEAM" by partnering with community artists and Saint Mary's College.

For more information on participating, either as a volunteer or member, please contact:

moraga.kiwanis@gmail.com or su327@scoutsnorcal.org.



Shefali Goel with a robot.

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