

FREMONT BRANCH & New Haven Unified School District STEM Discovery Day Takes to the Road to Union City

On Saturday February 1st, 2020, 80 third, fourth and fifth grade girls from New Haven Unified School District and their moms joined us for our first ever STEM Discovery Day in Union City. These young STEM enthusiasts embarking on our Pathway to STEM included many Title 1 students on a scholarship through NHUSD. Five teams of former Tech Trekkers from the Tri-city area, led by AAUW members and parents of Tech Trekkers, presented fun, hands-on activities, building the tallest tower, learning about your senses, solving a crime using forensics, building a rainbow in a tube, and an introduction to coding. A team from the Irvington High School Girls' STEM Club team had the girls build a simple electric train using the principles of electricity and magnetism. A team of PhD students from Stanford University Chemistry Department introduced polymers with a fun and hand-on activity 'Why Do Baby Diapers Absorb sooo much water'. And our regular supporter, Engineering for Kids, had the girls build a rocket. The hospitality team's generous and delicious offering of snacks and beverages kept the attendees full in stomach as they filled their minds with STEM. All attendees left with a t-shirt.



Welcome from Board Member Sharan Kaur



Tech Trekkers present Rainbow in a Tube



Forensics: Get those Finger Prints



Senses: Activate your sense of smell



Will this Tall(est) Tower Stand ?



Polymers



Girls just want to do STEM

By STEPHANIE GEISCH

On Saturday morning, local 3rd - 5th grade girls and their moms were having a blast launching mini rockets, learning about the senses, dusting for fingerprints, building towers out of pasta, and experimenting with polymers and density. Since 1991, the Fremont branch of American Association of University Women (AAUW) has been holding "Stem Discovery Day" to introduce girls to science in a relaxed and hands-on setting. Especially in the Bay Area, STEM career opportunities are expanding, but women are still underrepresented. Stem Discovery Day is a way of communicating to children that science is for everyone regardless of gender.

Previously, the event was always held in Fremont, but this year's February 1 event took place at Cesar Chavez Middle School in Union City. Students rotated between seven workshops, each with an activity from a different field of science. In a workshop on the five senses, kids tried to guess the flavors of gum while



blindfolded. In another, they built towers of pasta and tested them in a makeshift wind tunnel. In the popular forensic workshop, kids learned how to dust for fingerprints and then used their skills to determine which of their moms had "soles" some chocolate and left an incriminating thumbprint behind.



PhD students from Stanford held a workshop on polymers (through studying the absorbency of diapers), and Engineering for Kids helped students build and troubleshoot mini rockets. However, the majority of workshops were hosted by local high school students who were alumni of AAUW's Stem Trek scholarship program - a weeklong summer camp at Stanford for 7th grade girls.

Having older students give back by teaching not only helps develop leadership skills, but also shows the next round of students that they have role models to look up to. "You see (the presenters) so poised, so confident, but they all started like you," AAUW member Lecha Saldanha told the younger children. "I've known many of them, some of them used to attend this event, and then they joined again to start presenting."

John Thompson, superintendent of New Haven Unified School District, also spoke at the event. A former science teacher, he was enthusiastic when Saldanha got in touch with him. He said, "One of the things I always struggled with when I was teaching science quite a few years ago was I would see these students at the school—girls—that I knew should have been in my science classes, had the potential to be scientists, and I couldn't talk them into taking the higher level sciences."

AAUW's next Stem Discovery Day will be on March 21 at Wilkins Middle School in Fremont. Registration will be available starting in mid-February, 2020. More information can be found on the AAUW website <http://fremont-ca.aauw.net/>, and the organization can be contacted at AAUWFremontBranch@gmail.com.