Economic security 'STEMs' from next generation professionals

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The Navy's Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program gave female students at Yokosuka Middle School a chance to experience possible future professions in a hands-on environment, April 18.

"We want to encourage the students' interest in STEM fields, in which women are under-represented," said Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) Public Works Department Production Officer Lt. Cmdr. Lakeeva Gunderson. "We want to show them that they are as capable as anyone else. Our intent is to make them understand that even though they may not like math or science, the basic skills create opportunities and help make them more competitive later in life."

The girls were introduced to various fields related to the STEM program by a mostly female Navy and Department of Defense team at a series of events hosted by several commands, including CFAY Public Works Department, the Naval Oceanographic Antisubmarine Warfare Center and U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka.

STEM is a program supported by the Department of the Navy that aims to increase the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, fields critical to meeting the Navy's future workforce needs.

"Our over-arching STEM objective is simple - Increase, inspire and support the talent pool from which the future's great Sailors, naval scientists and engineers will come," said Chief of Naval Research Rear Adm. Nevin Carr.

In 2009 the Office of Naval Research (ONR) funded 170 STEM initiatives Navy-wide, spending more than $55 million to coordinate the events.

"I like that we get to go to places that we don't normally get to, and explore things hands on," one of the participants, an eighth-grade student at Yokosuka Middle School. "It's important to see what you want to be when you grow up."

Seventh-grade students Kristof Keith and Mark Otton learn about static electricity at the Toshiba Science Museum in Kawasaki City. Students at Yokosuka Middle School spent Wednesday learning about science, technology, and engineering. Several groups visited CFAY job sites to learn about everything from reactor science to medical technology. Other groups listened to guest speaks or visited facilities off-base.

Photo by Dale Duncan Jr.

STEM programs aim to increase the number of four-year degree graduates in these fields by fostering mentorship and hands-on learning experiences for students well before they reach college age and ask the critical question 'what do I want to be?'

Many of the Sailors were just as enthusiastic as the students attending the events, and were eager to show the students opportunities they could have in the next six to 10 years.

"I didn't get the same opportunity in school," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Adriane Dowden, a lab technician at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka. "This is a great opportunity because it gives them a little more hands-on experience. You can tell a kid anything, but when you show them and let them do, it gets their minds sparkling and interested in pursuing careers."

Yokosuka Middle School student Jeremiah White smiles after peddling to generate 76.5 watts of electricity at the Toshiba Science Museum.

Photo by Dale Duncan Jr.

Fourth Ave. road closure for steam line repairs

Contractors will be replacing a main steam line that runs directly under Fourth Ave. This will require a full road closure from April 30 to July 9 for a portion of Fourth Avenue.

Vandegrift Lane will still allow vehicle access. Detour signs will be posted at the Fourth Ave intersections at Gridley Lane and Third Ave.

All housing residents in that area will still have access to their parking areas.