

Summer camp empowers girls in STEM fields

BY MATT STULBERG
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MILTON — With her heart set on a career in robotics, Maya Woodland,

13, a rising eighth-grader at Southern Columbia Middle School, said participating in the 2022 Girls STEMPower Summer Camp, aimed towards promoting women

in STEM fields, was an exciting and educational experience for her.

Hosted by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU), the camp is

designed to support young women in middle school who are interested in or hoping to pursue a career in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) field, areas where employment numbers still skew heavily male.

“We learned about different fields of STEM and then the jobs that go along with each of the fields,” said Woodland, who was joined at the camp by her sister Alex, 11. “When we talked to most of the people who were in those jobs most of them were female because they wanted to see other females to see a female in that jobs.”

Throughout the course of the camp, which ran from Monday, June 13 through Friday, June 17, attendees practiced 3D printing at Bucknell University’s Makerspace, visited Knoebels Amusement Park to study the physics and engineering of the park’s rides, created physical education games using coding software, learned about the science of nutrition and agriculture at BrightFarms in Selinsgrove, and heard from a variety of speakers including female aviators.

On Friday, camp participants concluded their week of science exploration with presentations to visiting family on what they had learned and how they enjoyed their experience.

Reese Wolfe, 11, who will be starting sixth grade at Northumberland Christian School in the fall, said she especially enjoyed the time



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Reese Wolfe, 11, presents on her experience learning about the physics and engineering of amusement park rides at Knoebels Amusement Resort, part of CSIU’s Girls STEMPower Summer Camp.

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spent at the Makerspace.

“We got to do 3D printing and then we got to laser engrave acrylic and we got to write our names on it. Then we got to make stickers, which I made of my dog,” said Reese.

Woodland said being able to do so many hands-on activities was one of the best parts of the camp, along with seeing so many women in science careers.

“That was really fun because I’m also a visual learner so I really enjoy the hands on stuff,” she said. “I think it engages the learning more because you’re reinforcing what you learned with hands-on activities.”

Tanya Dynda, an instructional technology and STEM specialist at CSIU who led the camp, emphasized the importance of not only getting more young women interested in STEM, but also encouraging them

to pursue those passions as careers and remain resilient in the face of societal challenges.

“The camp itself is crucial because right now we still are low in terms of percentage of women going into STEM careers, so everything we did connected to some kind of STEM career. So we were just exposing them to a variety of things so they know what’s out there and they can start exploring it,” said Dynda.

“It’s crucial that we also get to see that females are needed in a less dominant field, and it starts with middle school, to get it young and understand that they’re quite capable of doing that kind of career,” she added. “It all comes back to them thinking about their careers and what they’re able to do with the strengths and skills they’ve discovered in this camp.”