

STARBASE Helps Make STEM an Everyday Skill

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By AERIN CURTIS Wyoming Tribune Eagle [1]

CHEYENNE – A group of Wyoming students has learned how to combine engineering with the clothes they wear.

The all-girl group took part in a high-tech fashion overnight at the Wyoming STARBASE Academy [2] on Friday, director Barb Marquer said. STARBASE is a National Guard program.

They learned how to use circuitry and conductive thread to create high-tech fashion pieces, she said.

“We teach them simple circuitry and simple design,” she said. “If they do everything well, then their piece lights up.”

The girls were predominately members of several Girl Scout groups and came to the Raper Armory from several places around the state.

One of the goals of this program was to increase girls’ interest in science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – fields, Marquer said. This is the second girl-targeted program STARBASE has offered. Another is planned for this spring.

“Statistically, the number of girls in these fields is very low. It’s creeping up, but it’s very low,” she said. “And, a lot of time, if they’re working (on a project) with boys, they feel the need to have the boys take it over.”

Many STARBASE programs are open to both boys and girls, she added.

Friday’s project walked girls through the steps of the process used in designing an engineering project, Marquer said.

“They have a problem, do the research and come up with solutions, (then) develop a prototype and test it and tweak it,” she said.

The project also gave the girls a chance to connect with others who have an interest in fields like the sciences and engineering, Marquer said.

“The whole thing is to get girls who are interested in that kind of technology to network,” she said. “They’ll benefit from the collaboration.”

Some parents and troop leaders said they were interested in bringing their scouts for similar reasons.

“Any opportunity for girls to be involved in science and be together is awesome,” Troop 1372 leader Karmen Rossi said. “There’s a lot of research out there that when girls are together, they find science

and math less intimidating.”

Previously, her troop did a crime scene investigation night science program at STARBASE, she said. The group returned for this event because the hands-on projects help foster an interest in science, she said.

“STARBASE and Girl Scouts together is a perfect melding of the two ideas,” she said.

Some girls attended from Wheatland and Casper.

“When we find there’s an actual STEM program, we try to go for it,” Casper troop leader Dorothy Neumiller said.

She said her daughter was excited to work with lights and technology.

“Girls are good at the science and math and technology, but they don’t always get the push toward it,” Neumiller said.

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