

## GIRLS AND SCIENCE MIX WELL

# Awesome Experiences at March Saint Mary's STEM Conference



LEANDER HAURI

The Orinda-Lafayette-Moraga branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) held its seventh STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Conference at Saint Mary's College on March 25. Sixth through eighth grade girls participated in interactive workshops, heard exciting speakers, met career professional women and networked with like-minded girls. Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, Lafayette Rotary and Rossmoor Rotary Clubs supported the conference financially and operationally. Over 20 Rotarians participated, working as part of the six-month pre-planning Leadership team, as senior workshop monitors, photographers and assisting with a host of other logistical details.

By MARAKI ESAYAS  
Contributing Writer

Have you ever thought about how acclaimed women scientists achieved fame? Marie Curie, Jane Goodall, Katherine Johnson. This list goes on and on. They had childhood passions and held onto them. They worked endlessly until they rose to the top of their schools, fields and science itself.

What if they grew up in this time period? Having their dreams be accepted and encouraged as young girls? It would make their lives easier, huh? Well, it's what I imagine the thought process was which helped coordinate the AAUW STEM (American Association of University Women: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Conference at Saint Mary's College.

Ever since forever, I have asked myself question after question after question. I remember reading Wikipedia articles when I was younger, any piece of information satisfying me somehow. I guess it is what makes me inclined to STEM, the thirst for knowledge and discovery, using the resources around me to find things out for myself.

I don't get many chances to express my love and passion for science and engineer-

ing. When my teacher sent an email to all the girls in my science class, you can imagine what I thought to myself: "A conference funded, taught and empowered by women, for girls like me at a fancy-looking college? Oh, yeah! I would be absolutely dumb not to take this opportunity." And so I did.

This was my second AAUW STEM Conference, first in seventh grade and now in eighth. I'm not going to lie. This year exceeded my expectations from the previous conference.

Initially I was a bit disappointed because I didn't get any of the workshops I really wanted. But I ended up learning so much. For example, I didn't know just how much robot and artificial intelligence designs take from nature until the Designing Robots workshop. And you can hear absolutely nothing in space, thanks to the Experiments in Space. Or math can actually give some semblance of entertainment (I had really low hopes for this workshop).

The whole day was an awesome experience. I got to learn about science, something I love, with my friends from school. Hey, I even made some new ones! I think meeting people who understand the passion for observing everything around you,

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making new discoveries and being curious, especially with all the girls being from the Bay Area, kind of relieved me. There are so many other girls out there who have passions in science, technology, engineering and math, but they can be so hard to find.

I believe having a place dedicated to empowering young girls is important and

necessary in our community. Awesome keynote speakers, awesome people and awesome cookies. Why wouldn't you go? And who knows, maybe this conference could be the starting point for another Mae Jemison.

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