

Girls learn about trades, nontraditional career options

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Young girls from Minneapolis spent a recent Saturday gaining hands-on experience in trades and nontraditional job fields. Part of the 9th annual YWCA Power Girls events, more than 50 girls participated in the day-long workshop at Dunwoody College of Technology.

New this year, the event started with a fashion show that highlighted women in career fields ranging from firefighters to high school science teachers, from millwrights to a young trade school student. Said one youth, "The fashion show was cool. I learned a lot of things about people in different jobs, and what they had to learn in school, and what they earn, and what they like about their jobs."

Satiya Solomon, event co-organizer and Board President of Women in the Trades, shared, "We wanted to have fun and highlight the trade clothes and tools that are important to succeed. People are still shocked by seeing women in trade clothing, and toting around tools."

Throughout the day, girls attended educational and hands-on sessions where they were able to learn from firefighters, a K9 police officer, women engineers and a range of skilled tradeswomen. "How many years of college does it take to become a police officer, because my sister and I want to do that!" questioned one young participant after meeting the Minneapolis K9 police officer and her canine companion.

For another nine-year-old participant, the firefighters made a big impression. "The firefighters were amazing. When we saw the truck and stepped inside, it felt like we were firefighters right away."

Her 10-year-old sister agreed: "Meeting the firefighters was my favorite part. We got to try on the uniforms – they were big and heavy."

Representatives from the Society of Women Engineers led the girls in an Egg-mobile activity. The women engineers said the event "helped expose girls to many disciplines and careers that most people don't understand." They see Power Girls as an "especially great opportunity for girls because women are underrepresented in the engineering field."

The Power Girls event has continued to grow every year since its inception. Most of the girls who attend are participants in year-round YWCA of Minneapolis Girls & Youth programs including Girl Power, an all-girl after-school math and science program, and Discovery Leadership, an all-girl leadership development program.

Christa Perkins, event co-organizer and Girls Inc. Manager at the YWCA of Minneapolis, summed up the event. "Women who work in the trades and jobs where women are still underrepresented are great role models for girls because they have challenged stereotypes in pursuit of personal and professional success. Girls gain hands-on learning beyond what they receive in the classroom. They build skills, confidence and a curiosity for new experiences."