



Kerry Serl / Courtesy Photo

Students of Maria Carter's electronics class will make robots during the Expanding Your Horizons event.



Daniel Krenelka / Courtesy Photo

Attendees of Expanding Your Horizons race boats in the class led by civil engineer Liana Liu.



Kerry Serl / Courtesy Photo

Dr. Nagelkerke teaches a student during a chemistry class at a prior year's Expanding Your Horizons event at Centralia College.

Expanding Your Horizons Career Conference

By Kerry Serl

For The Chronicle

On Saturday, Centralia College opens its doors to over 200 seventh, eighth and ninth grade girls and their parents from all over Lewis County at the Expanding Your Horizons conference. The goals of the EYH conference are to interest middle school females in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); foster awareness of STEM careers; and give them an opportunity to meet women role models in STEM and other non-traditional careers.

The half-day conference starts with an electrifying experience as presenters from the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry entertain and educate the young ladies and their parents in a talk on electrostatics. Girls then attend two hands-on workshops of their choice, delving deeper into the associated professions. In Ruby Nagelkerke's chemistry class, girls use Bunsen burners and beakers to make bath fizzers and lip gloss. Maria Carter leads an electronics class where girls make robots and use a soldering iron. Girls build and race boats in the class led by civil engineer Liana Liu. Not only are girls exposed to professions they may not know much about, they also meet women role models who are working in the field.

Parents have the opportunity to attend concurrent workshops. Tracy Dahl, the director of financial aid at Centralia College, will talk about how to

Other STEM Opportunities

Boy Scouts, STEM University for Boy Scouts, Oct 25, PLU. Contact: (253) 682-2228

Thurston County EYH, March 7, 2015. Contact: (360) 943-1527

W.F. West, STEM summer camp for boys and girls, August 2015. Contact: (360) 807-7234

apply and pay for college. Alison Eldridge, from Washington Student Achievement Council, will talk about what students need to accomplish before applying for college.

This is the 21st year of the conference at Centralia College. In 1993, the American Association of University Women, Centralia College, and the TRiO Talent Search program partnered to put on the first EYH conference. The collaboration was natural as all three organizations have a mission to empower individuals through education. Jan Leth, of AAUW, worked on EYH that first year and recalled, "Some of us were active at that time in other national women's associations and there was much to read and explore about the shocking news that young girls were, not only, not doing well in math and science, but that they were going on to high school and university without choosing those areas to explore."

Although girls and boys have similar classes and abili-

ties in math and science in middle school, female participation drops off in high school, again as they enter college, and again in obtaining advanced degrees. Despite huge increases in female education and equality in the workforce in the past 50 years, females are still underrepresented in many math and science careers. This relates in part to the pay gap between men and women, as many of the STEM careers pay better than others.

After 21 years, EYH has offered STEM career exploration to thousands of young women in Lewis County who otherwise might not have had exposure to potential math and science career opportunities. Kathleen Vodjansky-Ward, Centralia College, said, "The young ladies have an opportunity to be on a college campus and envision themselves as a student there." The hope is that more girls will attend college. Vodjansky-Ward says the college's statistics show that over 50 percent of the EYH participants enroll at Centralia College alone (the college does not have statistics on attendance at other colleges).

The cost is \$10 per family. Scholarships are available. Bus transportation is being provided from east, south and north Lewis County to bring girls and parents to Centralia for the conference. For more information, call (360) 736-9391, ext. 358 or visit www.facebook.com/EYHLewisCo.

EYH Full Circle

Girls participating in Dr. Brandy Fay's veterinarian workshop at Expanding Your Horizons have hands-on experience drawing blood on a cat, performing ultrasound on an animal for pregnancy, and cutting into tumors removed surgically from dogs.

Dr. Fay is not only a presenter at EYH, but she was an early attendee. Dr. Fay attended EYH in 1994 - 1996. "I wanted to be a vet since I was five years old. A guidance counselor recommended I get as much taste of the profession as I could before making a commitment to the career and the lifestyle," she said. EYH provided her an opportunity to stitch up dogs and clean teeth in Dr. Anna Sparling's veterinarian workshop. Dr. Sparling provided a valuable female perspective on the veterinarian field. "Even in the mid-1990s, the veterinarian field was male-dominated. Today, the majority of graduates of the majority school are female," said Dr. Fay.

As part of EYH in middle school, Dr. Fay also attended Dr. Ruby Nagelkerke's chemistry workshop. Dr. Nagelkerke is still a professor at Centralia College and continues to teach a chemistry workshop at EYH. "Not

only did I enjoy the class, Dr. Nagelkerke was one of the reasons I attended Centralia College my first two years of college," said Dr. Fay.

"I love teaching the workshop. I love the passion and the questions," Dr. Fay said. "I get to see the girls who are in the position where I once was." In the six years she has been teaching the workshop, Dr. Fay has offered the students the chance to come spend time in her office. Several have taken her up on her offer. Dr. Fay saw the benefit of EYH to her own career and now can see it from the side of an experienced vet. "I take a day off of work to teach the workshop. Anybody who knows me, knows I don't like to miss work."



Kerry has assisted at Expanding Your Horizons with American Association of University Women

for seven years. She is the Chair of the American Association of University Women Scholarship Committee and is passionate about education. Kerry lives in Napavine with her husband and son.