

# A day for the girls

## Engineering Exploration Day

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HOUGHTON - When Gabrielle Roberts' mother told her about the Girls and Engineering Exploration Day Saturday at Michigan Technological University, Gabrielle decided it was something she'd like to try.

"I've been in a lot of engineering classes," said Gabrielle, who is in seventh grade at Houghton Middle School.

Despite her interest in the concept and practice of engineering, Gabrielle said she's not certain, yet, if she wants to make a career of it.

"Right now I like it more as a hobby," she said.

Gabrielle's mother, Loret Roberts, who was also at the event aimed at girls in seventh to 12th grade, and is a part of Engineers Week at Tech, said although Gabrielle may not end up in an engineering career, she thought it was a good idea to expose her to an in-depth explanation of the science.

"I'm always encouraging Gabrielle with anything," she said.

Loret Roberts said she works at the Western Upper Peninsula Center for Science, Math and Environmental Education at the Copper Country Intermediate School District, and Gabrielle has attended many of the Center's summer classes.

Loret Roberts said although Gabrielle has decided to go to college, she hasn't decided where, and attending events such as Girls and Engineering Exploration Day provides her with more information.

"We do give her chances," she said.

Joan Chadde, director of the Center for Science and Environmental Outreach at Tech, said the purpose of the event is to give girls such as Gabrielle information about what engineering is to help them make the decision to possibly continue their education in that direction.

Chadde said this was the second time for the Girls and Engineering Exploration Day. The first one was in 2013. Saturday's event was conducted at the Tech Great Lakes Research Center. It included presentations describing what engineering is and talks by women who are engineers or who taking engineering classes at Tech. The event was co-sponsored by Tech Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Engineering Fundamentals, and the College of Engineering. It was coordinated by the Center for Science and Environmental Outreach.

Chadde said another purpose of the event was to get parents involved in helping their daughters make decisions about going into engineering.

There were about 20 girls at Saturday's event, which Chadde said was about the same as the 2013 event.

There does seem to be a steady growth in the number of girls deciding to get into the sciences as a career, including engineering, Chadde said.

"The numbers are going up," she said.

One of the Tech engineering students conducting the event was Kelsey Abbott, who is in the Tech College of Engineering focusing on sustainability issues. She thinks she may make a career in rail technology.

Abbott said she's had an interest in engineering for a large part of her life.

"I decided I was coming to this school when I was 8," she said.

Abbott said there is still a need to get girls interested in the sciences while they are going to school.

"I feel a lot of times the things they are shown as they're growing up are not in engineering," she said.

Having college students talk to the middle and high school girls about engineering is a good idea, Abbott said.

"I feel we are closer in age (to the girls) than an adult talking to them," she said.

One of the girls who was impressed by the event was eighth-grade student Kinley Lyons from the Luther L. Wright Middle School/High School in Ironwood.

Lyons said engineering is where her interests are, now.

"I really like building things," she said.

At school, Lyons said she often participated in projects to build towers from various kinds of materials.

"I usually make the highest one," she said.

Besides listening to presentations, the girls paired up for hands-on projects, such as building a tower out of pipe cleaners using only one hand each, and making a device which could aid someone with only one hand in daily life. Roberts and Lyons were paired up.

She was very much enjoying her time at the Girls and Engineering Exploration Day, Lyons said.

"This is really fun," she said.