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Scholars simulate Mars mission



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By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the *Keizertimes*

SALEM—Brent Preston, of Keizer, was just one of 12 local students to participate in the inaugural Oregon Washington Aerospace Scholars Sophomore Experience.

The three-day camp, which took place July 30-Aug. 1 at Garmin Industries in Salem, gave scholars the opportunity to design a plan for a future robotic mission to Mars.

The students were split into four groups—engineers, science, finance and public relations.

Preston was placed on the finance team, which had to determine why the mission should be funded, who is paying for it and what the money would be spent on.

The group determined most of the mission would be paid for by the U.S. government in conjunction with other countries as well as private industry. The cost was \$2.5 billion to be split up between the launch, science, power, computer, communications and the landing.

While Preston didn't choose to be on the finance team, he was glad it was assigned to him.

"I like thinking about that," he said. "It wouldn't be very challenging if you had all the money to do whatever you want. It's more realistic and more fun to see how you can squeeze everything perfectly into that budget."

Preston said his love of science began with playing with Legos and then expanded with Kara McGuirk's class at Early College High School, where he'll be a junior.

To get into the camp, Preston had to complete two college-level lessons using University of Washington curriculum. Of the 28 students that applied, only 12 were accepted.

"It was pretty challenging," Preston said. "It was really technical and it took a long time. Read articles about the history of NASA and aerospace, the planets, how things move in space. It covered a lot."

Along with the mission to Mars, the scholars toured the Garmin Factory and met STEM professionals in career pathways they might wish to follow.

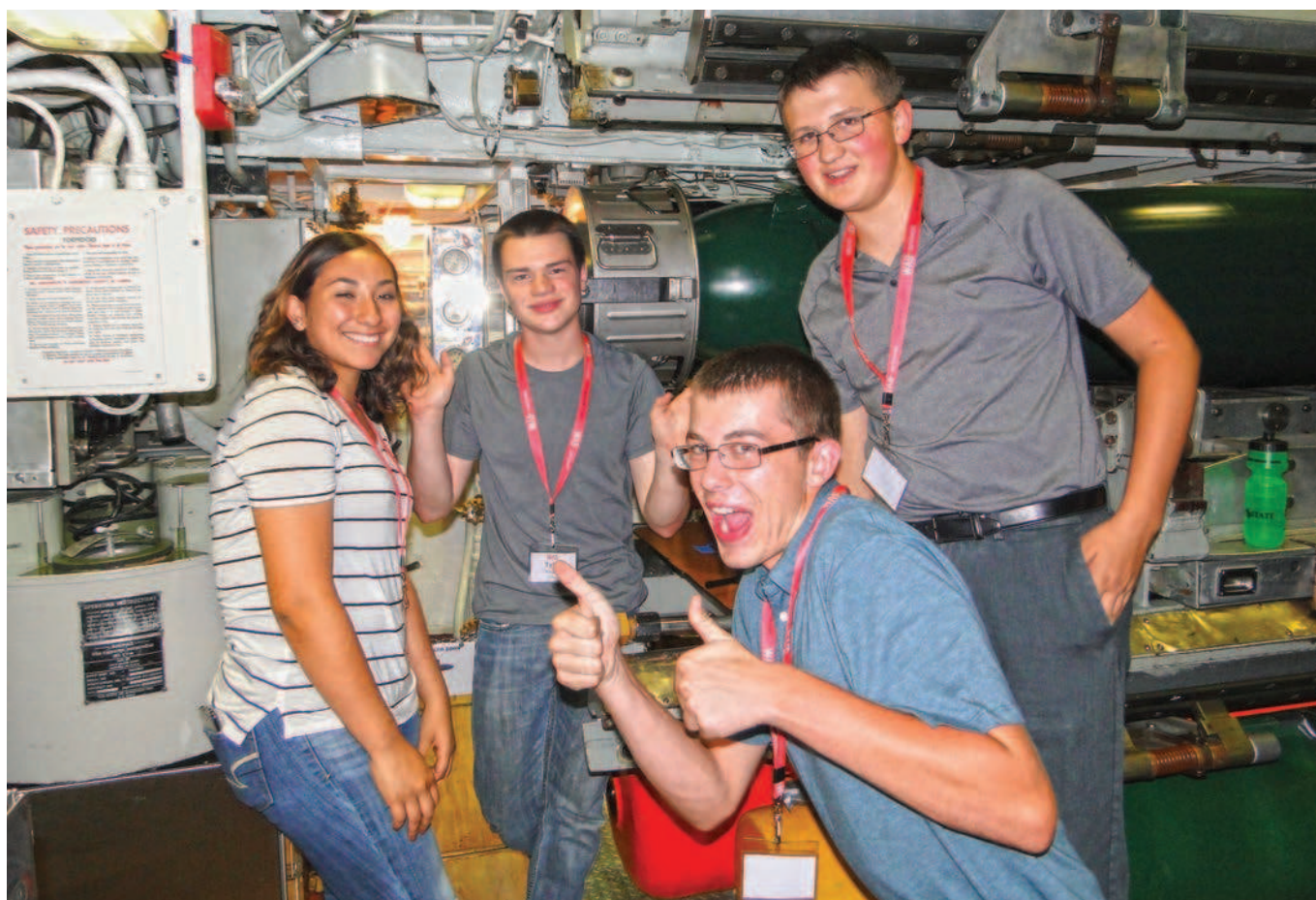
Preston wants to be an engineer, which he learned isn't exactly what he thought it was.

"There was a lot more speaking than I thought there'd be in engineering," Preston said. "We talked to the people at Garmin and they said they have to coordinate with other teams that do different things, all these different levels of making one product. They said they do more talking than they do programming, which now that I think about it makes sense, but I didn't know."

Preston's favorite part of the camp was experiencing the Martian Mission Simulations aboard the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry's submarine.

"It was really cramped and it just made you appreciate how difficult it would be," Preston said. "It's not only the fact that it was cramped, there was so much to look at, all those wires and buttons. It made your eyes go crazy so it made me appreciate how much those astronauts have to go through."

Campers, using NASA's spinoff technology, also had to sell a product like on the televi-

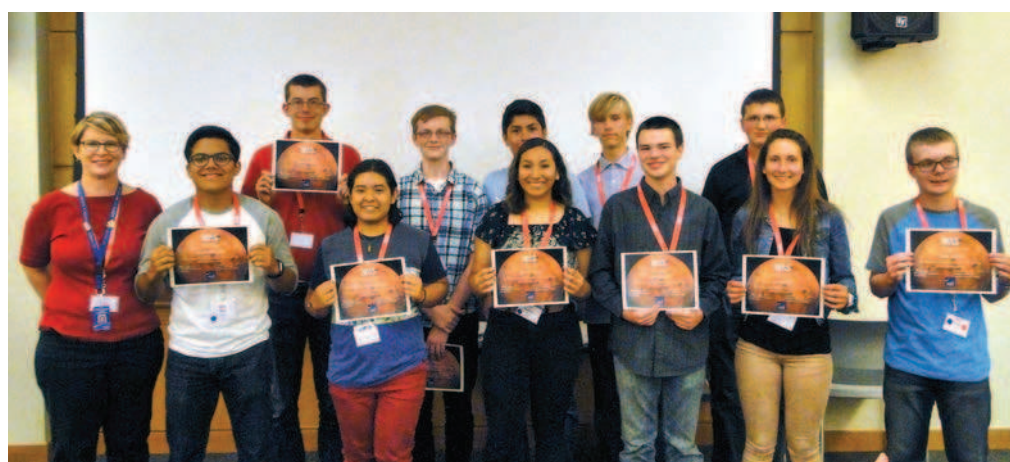


ABOVE: Brent Preston, of Keizer, gives the submarine at OMSI two thumbs up. BELOW: Scholars received a certificate after completing the Oregon Washington Aerospace Scholars Sophomore Experience on July 30-Aug. 1.

sion show *Shark Tank*. Preston's group, which won the people's choice award, was assigned Anthrax smoke detector.

The entire Summer Experience, which included staying overnight and meals, was provided at no cost thanks to a grant from NASA.

Preston plans to attend the WAS junior camp next summer, where students from all over Oregon will spend a week at the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum in McMinnville. The students who complete the program will be reward five credit hours from the University of Washington.



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