

Camp puts girls on STEM trajectory

An emphasis on science, math and technology

By HANNAH SIEVERT
The Daily Astorian

TILLAMOOK — Eighth grade may seem too young to design and create an app, but by the end of the week, the 13- and 14-year-old girls at Tech Trek will have made up to 10.

One app displays an interactive magic eight ball, another an interactive cowbell. One app allows users to draw on a screen and switch between different colors.

And lessons in computer hacking, coding, structural engineering and robotics? The 31 campers in Tillamook are up for the challenge.

This week, the American Association of University Women sponsored its fifth year of Tech Trek at Tillamook Bay Community College. The weeklong summer camp for girls going into eighth grade is designed to inspire them to pursue science, technology, engineering and math.

The association began Tech Trek camps in 1998 and now operates 22 camps around the country. The camp was created to combat the statistically low levels of women entering STEM professions compared to men.

Campers spend the week going to daily app-building and cybersecurity classes, and take part in engineering, marine biology



Photos by Hannah Sievert/The Daily Astorian
A summer camp for teenage girls headed into the eighth grade stresses science and math.

and robotics workshops taught by women.

"It's so valuable for girls to explore these fields and for us to empower them," Nadja Paulissen, a Neah-Kah-Nie High School biology teacher and a cybersecurity instructor at the camp, said. "I feel like the attitude that some of these fields are just for men is still really

prevalent."

All of the girls who attended this year's camp are from the Oregon Coast, including Astoria, Warrenton, Seaside, Tillamook and Newport. To participate in the camp, the girls must be nominated by their middle school teachers and show an interest in science and math.

A study published by the



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American Association of University Women in 2015 found that girls start to lose interest in STEM classes and careers around middle-school age, which is why the Tech Trek camp focuses on eighth-grade girls.

"This is the age they start to lose confidence and start to think, 'Is this a good fit for me?'" Emily Henry, the co-director of Tech Trek at the college, said. "We're trying to build up that confidence and help them realize that they are actually really good at it and can continue on in it."

Darby Doyle, who is from Astoria, said the camp has given her opportunities she wouldn't

be able to experience otherwise, like learning how to code and dissecting a squid. Both of Darby's older sisters attended Tech Trek before her.

"I really like the opportunity ... to see the different STEM field careers that are an option and learn more about what I can do," she said.

Up until last year, Tillamook Bay was the only community college that held a Tech Trek camp, according to Kathy Gervasi, the camp's student and family coordinator and a member of the association. Other Tech Trek camps take place in larger colleges and universities.

Gervasi, a retired elementary school principal, hopes the camp

is able to show girls the job possibilities that aren't always obvious in small, rural communities.

"We're in such a small community," Gervasi said. "We're looking at these other camps that are at universities, that are big time. We're very unique in that we're small but we're making a difference."

Supporters of weapons ban throw in the towel

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Supporters of an initiative petition to ban certain firearms in Oregon say they'll withdraw the initiative, but maintain efforts to restrict firearm possession in the state.

Initiative Petition 43, an effort to ban certain types of semi-automatic firearms and magazines holding more than 10 rounds, was proposed by a coalition of faith leaders in the wake of the shooting that killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in February.

Supporters were enthusiastic, but encountered legal opposition to their efforts when gun rights advocates filed challenges at the Oregon Supreme Court against the language used to describe the measure.

Opponents said the petition language didn't adequately describe the types of firearms banned by the measure or the extent of its proposed registration requirements.

The measure would have required people who already own the firearms specified to register them with state police if they wished to keep them legally. Going forward, Oregonians wouldn't be able to buy those guns, and could only legally obtain them by



Paris Achen/Capital Bureau
Rabbi Michael Cahana speaks in front of a group of other supporters of gun control at Augustana Lutheran Church in Portland on Thursday.

way of inheritance.

Supporters may propose another petition, or multiple petitions, in 2020, said chief petitioner Rev. W.J. Mark Knutson.

Knutson and other supporters say they made progress in the months since the initiative was first proposed.

"Every appeal process was used against us, a lot of money was used against us," Knutson said. "We have no apologies for our process. We heard the voices of the young and we moved right in."

Supporters were already contending with a tight turnaround time to get enough

signatures by July 6 to make it to the November ballot. They needed 88,184.

That timeline became more daunting after multiple

legal challenges were filed to the ballot title language, and on Wednesday, when the Oregon Supreme Court said that the ballot title needed significant changes before the petition could be circulated.

At best, that gave petitioners one day to gather the signatures they needed to qualify for the ballot, since the attorney general needed time to change the ballot title and for a public comment period.

Supporters of another gun control initiative petition, IP 44, which would have imposed new storage requirements on gun owners, withdrew the petition last week due to time constraints and said they'd lobby for those changes in the 2019 session and try to get on the ballot in 2020.

Secretary of State Dennis Richardson advocated for changes that would allow supporters of a petition to gather signatures after a bal-

lot title has been approved for a petition, but before any legal challenges have been resolved.

He took the opportunity Thursday to tout his efforts to reduce barriers to petition circulation.

"Whether I agree or not with a particular cause, I strongly believe Oregonians should have the right to petition their government without the deck stacked against them," Richardson said in a statement. "I urge the Legislature to adopt the grassroots petition protections that I have consistently advocated."

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PAPER DELIVERY WILL PROCEED AS USUAL
Have a safe holiday!
CLASSIFIED DEADLINES:
Tuesday, July 3rd, 11am for Wednesday, July 4th
Tuesday, July 3rd, 1pm for Thursday, July 5th
DISPLAY AD DEADLINES:
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