

TechSavvy and STEMtastic combine fun with possible careers

The event was held on the campus of the University of Jamestown.



Dr. Dawn Entzminger, left, veterinarian, works with girls during the "Doctor for a Day" workshop at TechSavvy on Monday, March 7, at the University of Jamestown. Girls learned how to suture wounds, using a banana.

By [Kathy Steiner](#)

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JAMESTOWN - Jordyn Avelsgard, a student at Litchville-Marion Public School, is interested in a career in some type of medical field. On Monday, she got to try her hand at suturing a wound. Her "patient" was a banana.

And the suturing occurred under the guidance of Dr. Dawn Entzminger, a Jamestown veterinarian, as part of the TechSavvy and STEMtastic event at the University of Jamestown.

In addition to suturing, the girls in the workshop learned about injections and wound management, tasks that Entzminger said she does every day in her work.

About 310 students from eight schools attended TechSavvy and STEMtastic on Monday, with each student participating in three hands-on workshops that were designed to be a fun way to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The workshops were led by professionals in their field from throughout North Dakota.



Janet Rosario, left, program director of North Dakota's Gateway to Science, works with girls in the "CSI: Jamestown" workshop on Monday, March 7, at the University of Jamestown during TechSavvy. The girls in the workshop visited separate stations featuring aspects of a fictional crime to determine who stole a diamond-making machine.

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Eighth graders attended from Jamestown Middle School, along with seventh and eighth graders from Medina, Pingree-Buchanan, Montpelier, Litchville-Marion, Gackle-Streeter, Hillcrest, Barnes County North, Edgeley and Kensal.

TechSavvy was a national AAUW program that was first offered in Jamestown in 2014 and is targeted to girls, said Erica Althoff, an engineer with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in North Dakota who co-chaired the event with Joan Enderle, representing Jamestown AAUW.

“The reason why we do TechSavvy aimed at girls was because of some research done that says .. at the middle school level is a chance to influence them to keep them motivated to pursue a career in STEM,” Althoff said.

The activities are designed to encourage students to see themselves as a future scientist, engineer or other STEM professional. Althoff said having TechSavvy in a university setting also helps them envision their future accomplishments.

The boys also have a program, which is STEMtastic. The workshops are held separately so boys attend with boys and girls attend with girls.



Amy Joseph, right, Jamestown Middle School STEM coordinator, checks out the completed entries of balloon towers made during STEMtastic on Monday, March 7, in the Reiland Fine Arts Center on the University of Jamestown campus. Boys worked in teams to make the tallest tower using balloons and tape that would stand on its own.

Twenty-nine workshops were available Monday featuring topics ranging from coding to forensic science, robotics, wetlands, dentistry, small machinery, drones and more.

Enderle said the professionals leading the workshops this year also included people in careers from two-year programs.

“When you look at the stats, and this is North Dakota stats ... there is a large number of kids who start a four-year college degree and drop out,” Enderle said. “And there’s a lot of demand for two-year degrees in North Dakota.”

AAUW Jamestown is the lead sponsor for the event. Other co-sponsors include the University of Jamestown, Jamestown Public School District and North Dakota’s Gateway to Science. The event also receives grant funding from the North Dakota STEM Ecosystem Network.

“We just really appreciate the support of the STEM professionals and the volunteers ... the support from the community has been great,” Enderle said.

Althoff said the students fill out a survey at the conclusion of the event about their experiences each year, which helps them plan for the next one.

"It’s always a positive when they have a good experience, first of all, and maybe just makes them think about, ‘Hey, I can do this,’ or it exposes them to a field maybe that they wouldn’t have known about,” she said. “And that’s kind of the goal for us, is just exposure.”