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## Workshop aims to ignite girls' interest in science

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Frozen bananas make terrible hammers.

This is what one group of more than 600 girls learned Saturday at the annual Expanding your Horizons in Science and Mathematics Conference sponsored by ATK Launch Systems at Mount Ogden Junior High. The program is dedicated to girls in sixth through ninth grades to get them interested in traditionally male dominated science and math professions.

"You can still be a woman and work in the same fields as men," said ATK spokeswoman Trina Patterson.

The conference featured a series of 29 classes for the girls, depending on their interests, such as what veterinarians do, cryogenics and creating polymers. Each of the presenters was a woman by design.

"It's easier to visualize yourself in someone's shoes if they are the same gender," which lowers the gender barrier, Patterson said.

Teaching the girls about cryogenics was ATK scientist Rachel Newell. She poured liquid nitrogen into three containers — fog immediately spilled over the edges. She inserted a red rose, which sizzled like water on a hot skillet.

She put a banana in another container and two racquetballs in the last one. The balls bobbed up and down until they were too frozen to move.

Newell had one of the students throw the frozen ball on the ground. The normally bouncy ball exploded with a bang, pieces scattering. The rose was also thrown to the ground, emitting a sound like broken glass. She then retrieved the banana from the minus-321-degree liquid and asked one of the girls to hammer a nail into a board with the now hard fruit. The nail started, but the potassium-rich hammer shattered.

"That was awesome," was the consensus of the girls.

Another group of students made polymers from household items under the direction of ATK design engineer Heather Wojciechowski. Using guar gum and borax, the girls made a green slime that one student happily proclaimed "looks like snot."

Sharon Klar, a veterinarian from North Ogden Animal Hospital, showcased her duties as a vet by examining a dog. She explained what to look for with respect to the dog's teeth, checked his lymph nodes, listened to his heart and checked to see if the dog had a natural symmetry.

"You also have to check his butt," she said, as the girls giggled.

Keeping girls interested in math and science is important to South Cache Eighth-Ninth Center math teacher Cindy Allen. So important that she spent her own money and time to make a video to play at her school to advertise the conference so more girls would sign up. Her efforts

paid off. She signed up 52 students this year to last year's six. "It was worth it," Allen said.

And if more girls go into math and science related careers, Allen said it will be worth it to them — they will "get jobs that pay better." She said the workshop shows the girls real-world applications that cannot be seen at school because of budget constraints.

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