

Deseret News

Program expands girls' horizons

They learn fun side of math, science firsthand

By **Kristy Kuhn**

Deseret News

Published: Saturday, April 25, 2009 10:49 p.m. MDT

Ashton Thomas is like any other teenage girl, except for one thing — she's a self-proclaimed purveyor of anything "weird."

On Saturday, the 14-year-old stood near the head of the line, waiting patiently for her turn to hold a human brain. When the instructor placed the pink, fleshy globe in her gloved hands, Thomas could be heard exclaiming "awesome!"

More than 300 teenage girls, just like Thomas, chose to wake up early Saturday and head to Northwest Middle School, 1730 W. 1700 North, to learn more about math and science at the Expanding Your Horizons conference.

Each girl had the opportunity to tailor her schedule to meet her interests by registering for three of 25 different workshops, all taught by women in their respective fields. Workshops covered a wide variety of topics meant to give the girls hands-on experience and help them see that math and science can be fun.

"It was the coolest thing ever," Thomas said about holding the brain in her hands.

The Chocolate Asphalt workshop had the girls making asphalt out of fudge, coconut and oatmeal, with each edible ingredient simulating a component of the real product. The Greeting Cards From Garbage workshop gave hands-on experience in recycling by turning shredded junk mail into paper pulp and, finally, into works of art as individual as each girl.

"I learned that we throw away a lot of trash," said Maribel Zamora, 13. "This is the only place we can live, and we're destroying the poor Earth."

Marilyn Marshall, a process engineer who teaches the greeting card workshop, says she saves shredded paper, along with stories about recycling, all year for the activity.

"It really does make a difference in their views of math and science," said Trina Patterson, a spokeswoman for Alliant Techsystems, one of the event's sponsors. "For them to get this exposure at such a young age, it's really good for them."

The conference has been held for the past eight years in Ogden, but this is the first year for Salt Lake City. Event organizers say that a second conference was needed to keep up with the demand since they have to put a cap on attendance.

"The (Salt Lake) conference will grow next year," Patterson said. "Girls will come back again and bring their friends so they can take other classes."

To find out more about the Ogden or Salt Lake conference, visit www.atk.com/eyh/eyh.htm.

E-mail: kkuhn@desnews.com

© 2010 Deseret News Publishing Company | All rights reserved