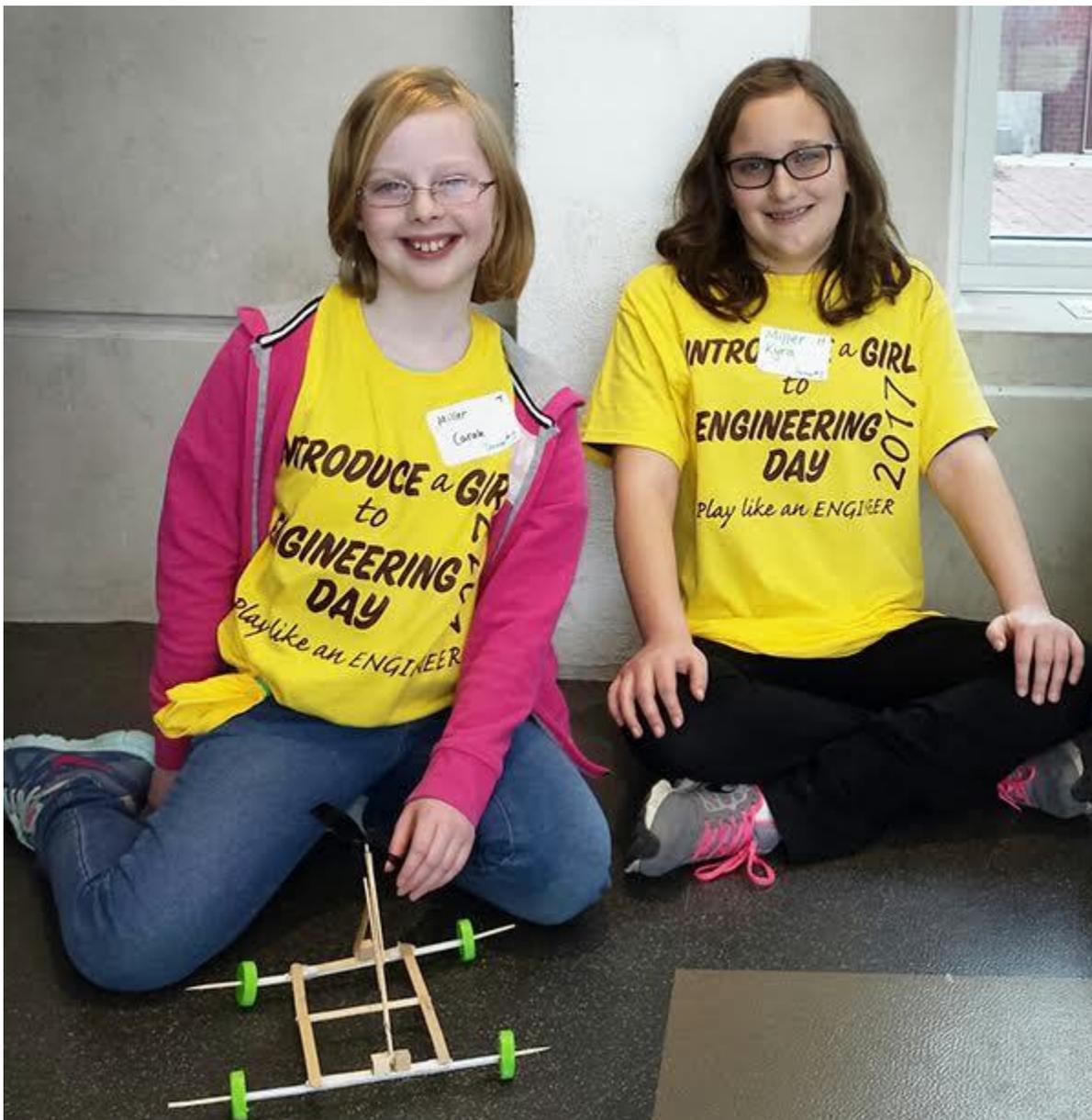


SIUE's Fifth Annual Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day draws regional students

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville entertained more than 250 students at its fifth annual “Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day” on Saturday, Feb. 18, in the SIUE School of Engineering building.

Girls from grades 5-8 attended the daylong event that offered exposure to the engineering field. Participants completed a total of five activities, covering the fields of civil, mechanical, electrical, industrial and computer science engineering.

Small groups used teamwork to design and create their projects. The creative problem solving aspects of engineering were discussed and explored. The participants worked collaboratively on projects, were encouraged to ask questions and used their imagination.

“We had 273 register, which is the most ever for this event, so the turnout was pretty good,” said Crishawna Nash, a junior computer science major and SWE youth outreach chair. “I’ve gone to all the rooms, and it’s enjoyable to watch the girls work on projects, seeing them know what they want to do and get a chance to learn or practice it before they get to high school.”

Professional women engineers and SIUE students were on site to provide support and guidance to participants. Following the completion of each activity, the professional engineers and the SIUE engineering students offered analysis and asked the participants probing questions about the project.

“This is awesome for girls ... they’re so dedicated, excited, driven and interested in the subject matter,” said Sarah Vonkampen, a senior industrial engineering major from Gurnee. “It’s great that our school makes the Engineering Building available to do this. It shows off the campus, and young girls get to learn about the college experience in general. It’s networking at a young age as they meet students, professors and alumni.”

“This is wonderful, because I never had anything like this when I was growing up,” said Caroline Williams, a seven-year veteran of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a SIUE alum (2011, civil engineering). “As a professional, I’m a minority in my field, so we need more women. I want to inspire them and let them know that they don’t need to be a man to be in this profession.

“It’s rewarding to see the thrill in their eyes, applying their problem-solving skills to the task and kids are excited about learning.”

Additionally, the SIUE STEM Center offered a special presentation for parents and teachers to outline challenges young women face in STEM fields, and discuss ways to overcome those difficulties.

“Motivated educators and supportive parents already know how to provide opportunities for girls to engage in STEM topics, but we want to make sure they know some of the social pitfalls that can prevent girls from pursuing those interests,” said Colin Wilson, SIUE STEM Resource Center manager. “The parents all left with a lot of resources that they can use to help the girls. Heading to the STEM Center also was productive and gave some tangible ideas to the parents.”

The \$15 registration fee included all activities, lunch and a T-shirt for each girl.

For more information, contact swesiue@gmail.com or visit facebook.com/swesiue.

The [SIUE School of Engineering](#) offers one of the most comprehensive and affordable engineering programs in the St. Louis region with eight undergraduate degrees, five master’s degrees and a cooperative doctoral program, all housed in a state-of-the-art facility. Students learn from expert faculty, perform cutting-edge research, and participate in intercollegiate design competitions. Companies in the metropolitan St. Louis area provide students challenging internships and co-op opportunities, which often turn into permanent employment. All undergraduate programs are accredited by their respective accreditation agencies.