

STEM TREK DAY 2017

Thank you, NT AAUW members, for supporting and attending our first STEM Trek day on June 10, 2017. Christine and I, and many of you, thought it was a great success, and we garnered many ideas for improvement.

Our initial vision was 3-fold:

1. Keep all girls nominated for Tech Trek involved with each other through high school.
2. Keep them involved with STEM, and planning to attend college.
3. Keep them involved with our NT AAUW branch.

We met our vision! Evaluations from the girls were supportive, encouraging, and full of ideas. Yes, evaluations were included in their schedule and information packets. Contact me if you want to see the tally of response. One response seen often was wanting to spend more time with the presenters, to understand how, and why, they chose their careers.

But first, let me say how grateful and unexpected was the support of our membership! Ten of you in particular (you know who you are!), a Very Big Thank You for your food, service and enthusiasm.

The day began with a profound presentation from **Dr. Kathleen Scully**, on CRISPR, a decades-long study in discovery through molecular biology, leading to “gene editing”. Dr. Scully gave a simplified, yet perhaps challenging presentation about the intelligence, creativity, collaboration and persistence that underlie scientific research in general, and the human genome in particular.



Dr. Kathleen Scully, gene sequencing and 3 attentive girls.

Second presenter, **Serita Cox**: She dazzled the girls at STEM Trek day even more so than she did at our program meeting about her non-profit *iFoster*. What a powerful woman and role model, who came from “aged-out” of foster care to receiving one of 14 Canadian-wide Physics scholarships, to managing an international Fortune 500 company, to living in Truckee sponsoring a national non-profit assisting foster kids. Whew!

Two sessions, one morning, one afternoon, with **Ashley Phillips & Jan Ellis**, Environmental educators with Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships, (SWEPE) got the girls and a few of us members on our feet and observing the world around us with spontaneous problem solving, a hula hoops exercise and a nature hike.



Ashlyn and Julia on their creative building exercise.

We had a rocket scientist :-) Dr. **Jasmine Woodworth**, a retired aerospace engineer with Aerojet, who designed the nozzle exit cones for the Titan rockets. Who knew this was so interesting! Jasmine studied chemistry, and loved physics, and found a rewarding career with rocket launchers. From Newton's Third Law of Motion she took us through propulsion, thrust, fuels, motors, components, igniters, oh my! Another testament to women in aerospace such as those of the movie "Hidden Figures".

The snacks! The lunch! The best! Our goal next year is to not have too much of a good thing! Thanks for your generous response NT AAUW members.

North Tahoe eighth grade math teacher **Nancy McNair** gave us Fun with Math, and one could easily see why Nancy has earned the highest awards in her 25 years teaching at North Tahoe School. Measurement, calculations, observation, and data sheets: it was fun, and all the girls were engaged and learning.

Rounding out the day was Environmental ecologist **Christine Ngai Ryan**, who gave a lively description of the life of a research biologist, and why they are so interesting! Christine told the girls how biologists approach a problem, decide on an investigation and produce results, which in her case, produces information about our Tahoe environment.

Thank you to all our great presenters, the enthusiastic girls, the helpful folks at TCPUD Recreation Department, and to our members who empower women and girls.

Meri McEneny and Christine Madden