

FOR THE LOVE OF SCIENCE:

Girls Explore STEM Careers at I-Heart STEM Conference

From building motorized ducks and unearthing geodes to searching for micro-organisms and designing computer programs, it was a day filled with fascinating adventure for the nearly 300 local eighth-grade girls participating in the fourth annual I-Heart STEM Conference at College of the Mainland.

During the interactive day of learning, students of McAdams Junior High School, Odyssey Academy, Santa Fe Junior High School, La Marque Junior High School, Blocker Middle School and Crosby Middle School explored the captivating world of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as part of an ongoing effort to encourage underrepresented female students to pursue STEM fields as a potential educational and career path.

"It's getting you ready for high school or college so you can see what you want to do," said Camryn Kirchner of Santa Fe Junior High School.

Working alongside COM faculty for a variety of hands-on activities, students learned about the various STEM programs offered at COM and were also introduced to the college's Dual Credit and Collegiate High School programs to encourage them to get an early start on their college journey.

Jason Abshire, associate professor of physical education at COM, kicked off the "Muscle Memory" session with a stimulating presentation focused on sports medicine and the muscle function involved with exercise.



"We explained the field of sports medicine to students and some of the options that are out there," Abshire explained. "The need is there, and it's going to be a field that is viable for them if they're interested in it."

Many students left with a better idea of the career path they wanted to pursue after exploring a variety of conference sessions. One well-received session was "Put a Band-Aid on it!" where students practiced basic nursing skills.

"After high school, I really want to be a NICU nurse because I like helping other people, and I like helping babies," said Alanna Brown of McAdams Junior High School.

To learn more about the I-Heart STEM Conference, email thoodye@com.edu.

