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GETting Bigger

Girls Explore Tech (GET) club nearly doubles in size its 2nd year, opens door to new outreach opportunities



Above » GET participants try out virtual reality headsets.
Below » A participant creates an LED bracelet.



Shining on » Logan High School junior & Utah STEM Ambassador Taylor Fang (pictured above) last year launched Girls Explore Tech (GET), a successful series of free afterschool technology classes she started as a sophomore. Taylor's work was featured in a March 2018 STEM Spotlight, and our follow up revealed exciting news: Over the past year, Taylor has further expanded GET, extending it from five to seven weeks and impacting about 35 middle school students—nearly double the 20 girls reached in its pilot year.

"GET was such a fun experience and I got a lot of positive feedback. I wanted to give more girls a chance to be a part of the program," she said. "I also added new ideas I had, like a short teaching experience, where the students got a chance to teach another afterschool club some of the coding they learned."

Other GET workshop activities included making LED bracelets, designing emojis, experimenting with artificial intelligence chatbots, and experiencing virtual reality headsets. The program was run in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah, and funded by a Community Im-

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pact Grant from the nonprofit AI4ALL. “I hope the girls walked away both more confident in their abilities and more inspired to be leaders themselves,” said Taylor. “I think that the hours I put into brainstorming, organizing, and teaching paid off in a great way.”

Taylor hopes to continue expanding GET, and to train more students to take over and help lead the program. “I still have a lot of ideas about new settings and topics I’d like to explore,” she said. “Giving more kids in my community exposure to STEM is something that’s really important to me.”

One special way Taylor was able to branch out through her experience from GET came as a result of the STEM AC Spotlight on her work last year.

“I got an email from Becky Harding with Junior Achievement of Utah. She said she had read the Spotlight on my work with GET. I was so excited when she shared her idea with me,” said Taylor.

Together with Becky and a representative from the Girl Scouts of Utah, Taylor got to direct a 10-hour coding summer camp for 34 Girl Scouts this past summer. The participants were the first to receive “Think Like a Programmer” badges in Utah.

“Directing the summer camp was definitely one of my all-time favorite opportunities. It was daunting at first to develop all of the curriculum and make sure I



A Girl Scout of Utah in the organization’s first “Think Like a Programmer” camp showcases her engineering project.



Taylor Fang helps a GET participant with a coding project at Mount Logan Middle School, where she runs GET.

hadn’t missed anything,” Taylor said. “I couldn’t have done it without all the support I got from Becky, the Girl Scouts, and the volunteers and equipment that Dell EMC sent.”

Activities included folding origami “algorithms,” learning about binary notation with Mike & Ike candy, and making music with coding. One final project involved small groups brainstorming, designing, and then presenting their own idea about applying tech to fashion.

In addition to her efforts around GET, Taylor has plenty to be proud of. She co-founded Allgirlithm (allgirlithm.org), a collaborative blog with resources and opportunities, including curriculum she used for GET. She was one of 30 students selected for the national she++ Summit, where she showcased GET at the Computer History Museum in the San Francisco Bay Area. Taylor even presented at the 2018 Utah STEM Best Practices Conference.

“I’m grateful to have had so many opportunities and ongoing support to share something I’m passionate about,” Taylor said. “I’d encourage every individual to look for ways to reach out in their own community.”

Taylor would like to thank Eric Bingham of Mount Logan Middle School, Becky Harding and Junior Achievement, AI4ALL, and the Girl Scouts of Utah.



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