



High-tech experience at DigiGirlz camp

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For some students, it beat sitting at home trolling through e-mail. For others, their parents made them do it. Whatever their inspiration, 150 high school girls arrived yesterday for the first day of DigiGirlz summer camp at Stony Brook University.

The three-day program, being offered for free, is designed to inspire young women to get involved in computer and technology-related careers.

According to representatives from Microsoft - which co-sponsored the camp with Motorola, CA and Stony Brook - there is a huge gap between the numbers of women and men in technology-related jobs, with fewer women opting for those positions.

"I've struggled my entire career with being the minority," said Laurie Carey, a Microsoft employee in information technology who put the program together from her Long Island home. "What we're trying to do is give them exposure."

By 2014, 1 million computer and technology-related jobs are expected to be added to the U.S. workforce, studies show. At current rates, U.S. universities will only graduate candidates to fill 50 percent of these new jobs, studies show.

Parents should encourage their daughters to go into the technology field, which despite ongoing outsourcing of jobs to Asia and other places is still "high paying," said Scott Passeser, director of the Center for Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology at Stony Brook.

"Perhaps women are not encouraged to go into math and science. ... A lot of this is on the parents," Passeser said.

Camp attendees yesterday took an Internet safety course, made business cards using Microsoft Publisher for a networking event in the evening, and even received a quick lesson in self-defense before a Web design course. They also took a course on computer hardware, polished their resumes and attended career workshops.

"It's really cool that they're having an all-girls camp," said Jenny Bard, 14, a

student at John H. Glenn High School in Elwood. "I'm good at math and science, and technology would be a good field for me, so I want to explore. If I wasn't at camp I'd be sleeping until 12."

Laura Ferrante, a special education teacher at Smithtown High School West and East, said she signed her daughter Danielle up for the camp because she thought it would help Danielle, who had been interested in journalism and the law.

Danielle Ferrante, 14, a 10th-grader at Smithtown High School West, said she had a change of heart when she got to the camp.

"I think you need computers nowadays to do everything," she said. "I thought it would be boring, but it's been really fun."

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