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GIRL SCOUTS DELVE INTO SCIENCE AND TECH CAREERS

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OAKLAND

SOMEONE HAS STOLEN the cookies from the cookie jar, and forensic chemist Katie Hutches and her group of Girl Scout helpers have narrowed down the suspects to Barbie, Scooby Doo and The Cookie Monster.

"You can't just assume it's the obvious suspect," said Hutches, 25, one of over 100 volunteers who came to the Chabot Space and Science Center Sunday as part of the Girl Scouts of Northern California's third annual Career Exploration Day. "You have to look at the evidence."

Hutches was part of the group of professionals and college students who all work in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Together, they turned the Space and Science Center into a virtual laboratory for more than 1,000 Girl Scouts who on Sunday learned about everything from forensics to chaotic systems and optical sciences. Participants in grades eight to 12 also

Please see **CAREER**, News 4



MELISSA SIMONDS, 8, of Pleasanton, (above) blows away the escaping gas of an exhibit that demonstrates atmospheric movement at Chabot Space and Science Center in Oakland on Sunday. Two young Girl Scouts (left) look at the sun using special viewers at the center. They were among more than 1,000 Scouts who participated in the Girl Scouts of Northern California's third annual Career Exploration Day.

D. ROSS CAMERON — Staff photos



JOB RECONNAISSANCE

Girl Scouts explore science, technology careers

► **CAREER**, from News 3

attended panels on leading women in careers such as paleontology and mechanical engineering.

The Career Exploration Day was sponsored by the Girls Go Tech initiative, a Girl Scouts program designed to increase girls' interests in science-related fields typically dominated by men.

"We want to show the girls all the options in engineering and technology that are available to them," said Jean Fahy, coordinator for Girls Go Tech. "Girl Scouting is a perfect opportunity to feel comfortable exploring science in an all-girl environment."

Throughout the center interactive demonstrations and hands-on activities designed were set up to educate the Scouts about science. In one corner, a gaggle of girls in green and brown vests stuck uncooked pasta onto marshmallows to create geometric shapes.

"They're learning that triangles make stronger structures," said Wendy Gu, a volunteer from the University of California, Berkeley, Society of Woman Engineers. Eight-year-old Melissa Simonds of Pleasanton turned her creation into an artistic

statement.

"It's the Eiffel Tower," she explained.

By eighth grade, half as many girls as boys are interested in science and mathematics careers, according to the Girls Go Tech Web site. Only 22 percent of engineers and scientists are women, despite the fact that women make up almost half the work force.

Don't tell that to 10-year-old Eleanor Kaj, a fifth-grader in Castro Valley's Troop 31398.

"I actually want to be someone who creates computer programs when I grow up," she said. "I think this is a great chance for kids to get a hands-on experience in science."

Kaj and fellow Scouts were busy making felt balls at a table sponsored by the Classrooms Across Cultures Project. The organization holds science workshops for girls, and the money raised is used to fund similar projects for girls in Afghanistan.

"You've got to toss it back and forth to have the fibers mesh together," Kaj explained, her hands immersed in a bath of soapy water. "And I'm not even on the second step yet!"

Across the room, Irene Degl'Innocenti

from Pacific Gas & Electric Company was instructing Scouts on the proper disposal of hazardous waste. Using tools ranging from paper clips to plastic straws, the girls had to transport a pingpong ball — the hazardous waste — from one end of the table to the other without using their hands.

Kelly Maher, leader of Troop 191 in Pleasanton, watched as her 8-year-old daughter, Kamdyn, created a Popsicle stick and tape instrument to transport the balls.

"This is great exposure for the girls to see what's out there," she said. "As a teacher, I like to see this."

Amelia Milne, 9, and her mother, Krista, came from Burlingame to attend the career day. Krista Milne was once an aerospace engineer but changed fields to biochemistry because she said she felt she wasn't supported by her male co-workers. She said she wants Amelia, who was busy studying a map used in land surveying, to be whatever she wants to be. "That's what the Girl Scouts is good for," she said.

Oh, and the culprit in the cookie case? Using fingerprint samples and basic hair fiber analysis, the Scouts were able to narrow it down to the most unlikely of the three — Barbie.