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## SWE workshop offers Girl Scouts an introduction to engineering

For five hours on a Saturday in November, WMU's Society of Women Engineers (SWE) presented its annual "Engineer for a Day" workshop at the Parkview Campus. Twenty-eight middle and high school Girl Scouts from the Heart of Michigan Council completed hands-on, problem-solving and learning activities to simulate what engineers do.



SWE members who directed the scout event (L-R), **Courtney Heath, Katie Risnes, Lauren Fromm, Lynnette Neil, Fernanda Pereira, Laura Alger, Allison Porrett, Persefoni Lauhon, Kelly McCarthy, and Melinda Katanbafnezhad**

For the first activity, "The Leaning Tower of Pasta," the scouts designed and built structures from spaghetti and marshmallows with the goal to have the structures hold as much weight as possible.

The scouts ventured outdoors to test how adding Mentos to a liter of soda pop can create some spectacular soda spraying.



For the **Egg Drop Event**, the scouts worked in pairs and used a variety of materials to design, create, and test packaging that would protect a raw egg from breaking when it was dropped from the second floor to the first. Some packages were more successful than others.

The scouts toured the Parkview Campus and learned why a concrete canoe floats, how a race car is designed and built, and what type of careers are open to those who major in engineering.

**Fernanda Pereira**, a first-year chemical engineering major from Canton, MI, coordinated the



**Geoff Van Gemert** (right), a member of WMU's Formula SAE team, showcases the 2009 car the team designed and built

event. At the conclusion of the workshop, SWE President **Allison Porrett** asked the scouts how many were interested in a career as an engineer, and approximately a third raised their hands.

"This workshop helped me decide what I want to do for a career," said **Maddie Dietrich**, an eighth grader. "I'm definitely considering engineering."



SWE's (L to R in green) **Allison Porrett, Laura Alger, and Lauren Fromm** lead the final engineering feat: the scouts made their own ice cream treats with milk, sugar, cream, flavoring, ice, rock salt, two plastic bags, and a lot of shaking.

Girl Scout leaders who attended the event with their troops were impressed with how the event stimulated the scouts' problem solving abilities and introduced them to the idea of an engineering career, said **Heather Ackman**, a representative of Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan.

SWE is planning a workshop for younger Girl Scouts in February 2010.

Send your thoughts or suggestions for future topics to the editor at [jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu](mailto:jerrie.fiala@wmich.edu) Thank you.