

Girls get clues about IT careers



Logan Weckbaugh (left) and Irelynn Collins find one of the geocaching clues in a tube on the baseball field.

The idea behind two IT Girls workshops held this summer at JCCC was to interest ninth-, 10th- and 11th-grade girls in information technology careers. And you can bet your sweet wiki it worked.

The first 20 girls to go through the class had fun setting latitude and longitude coordinates around campus in a high-tech treasure hunt known as geocaching, both leaving and finding clues. They gained experience in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher; learned Adobe Photoshop and use of a digital camera; created a cyber-safe Web page with wikis and blogs; and heard from women in the IT profession.

“I was blown away the first day of class by how much these girls already knew about technology,” said Patti Raouf, lead teacher. “I had to change the tech side of instruction because the students were so much more advanced than what we anticipated.”

Her assistant teacher, Janine McPhee, agreed. “Students these days are exposed to technology as soon as they start solid food.”

During breaks, students were busy making birthday cards for friends, electronically adding water colors to Facebook photos and putting dog heads on human bodies. Who says you can’t have schoolgirl pranks with technology?

In addition to the “tech side” of class was the exploration of IT careers by interacting with women already in the field – professionals at JCCC and BlueCross BlueShield of Kansas City, Mo.

“It was a good experience,” said Madeleine Fitzgerald, Lenexa. “I wanted to learn about careers in technology and about Photoshop.”

The 28-hour workshop was offered twice to two different groups during the summer. Girls who participated in the class are invited back to two JCCC fall events: a Career Fair



Marie Gavin and Anna King hide the prize.

from 6-8 p.m. Sept. 21 in the Gymnasium and an Action Conference for Women 8:30-11:30 a.m. Nov. 19 in the Capitol Federal Conference Center.

IT Girls was made possible by a Carl D. Perkins Non-Traditional Occupations (NTO) mini-grant funded through the Kansas Board of Regents designed to encourage high school girls to consider careers in which gender inequality exists. The grant was written by Phil Wegman, program director, Skills Enhancement, and Minnie Payton-Adams, director, JCCC Career Pathways and Programs.

“The goal of IT Girls is to keep girls engaged and interested in technology related to college degrees and careers in the field,” Wegman said.

“We hope the girls in this year’s class become mentors to other girls and encourage them in information technology,” Payton-Adams said.

Wegman says he would like to promote nontraditional occupations in the annual Summer Youth Enrichment programs, looking at continued IT Girls workshops and something like a “Men in Nursing” workshop for boys. **Im**



Lauren Post, Christine Perinchery and Anna King come up with humorous clues for the other teams.



Marie Gavin checks the location and Anna King looks to write down clues for a game involving handheld GPS devices.



Logan Weckbaugh, Anna Perinchery and Yugi Hou follow the clues in conjunction with the GPS toward one of the markers.