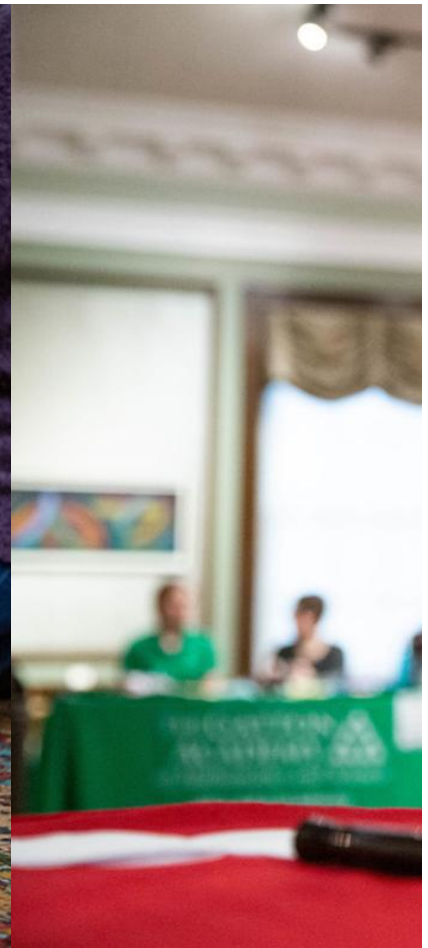


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WKU shows how girls can run the world

By JUSTIN STORY jstory@bgdailynews.com

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Girls Inc. member Alexandria Chappell, 11, of Owensboro crawls through a squeeze box, which mimics crawling through cave passages, at one of the Western Kentucky University departments booths during the Herstory@WKU girl empowerment event at the Kentucky Museum on Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020. (Grace Ramey/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Grace Ramey

Skylar Myers, 6, of Bowli booths during the Herstory@WKU girl empowerment event at the Kentucky Museum on Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020. (Grace Ramey/photo@bgdailynews.com)

The Kentucky Museum hosted an event Saturday that allowed girls a glimpse into a bright future.

Aimed at girls in grades 1-8, Herstory@WKU was meant to empower young girls and show them a path to achieving their career goals and following their interests.

“We always hope that we can excite the girls and get them subjects that interest them and let them know about ways they can pursue them as they get older,” said Christy Spurlock, education curator at the Kentucky Museum and an associate professor at Western Kentucky University.

The free event was put together with support from Wells Fargo and the WKU Gender and Women’s Studies Department.

Spurlock said the event was organized in recognition of the centennial of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

Herstory@WKU is one of a number of community programs organized in commemoration of the centennial called Journey to the Vote, but this particular event is unique for its focus on children, Spurlock said.

Several activities were held throughout the day that showed the numerous possibilities available to girls.

In the museum’s window gallery, girls could meet and get autographs from local women in diverse professional fields, including government, medicine, the arts and law.

Spurlock said the visibility of the professional women would leave a good impression on the girls who met them.

“I’m a firm believer that you have to see it to believe it,” Spurlock said. “If a girl wants to be in law enforcement or serve in the military or become a doctor, meeting someone from those fields in person is invaluable.”

The professionals, for their part, came away impressed with the girls they met.

“It’s just nice to see how ambitious they are,” said Dr. Abigail DeBusk, a sports medicine physician at The Medical Center’s orthopedic clinic and a WKU team physician. “I hope they can see the different careers available to them that you would normally think of as

men's jobs and that they can do whatever it is they want to do, no matter how crazy it sounds.”

Some girls arrived in costume as part of a costume contest.

Eight-year-old Breanne Wichman was dressed smartly in a blue blazer as former First Lady Michelle Obama, who she admires for her efforts to encourage children to eat healthier.

Breanne said she loves animals and wants to be a veterinarian.

“I got to meet a bunch of professional women,” Breanne said.

A total of 18 WKU departments had stations set up in the Kentucky Room featuring hands-on activities.

At one end of the room, WKU's Women in Science and Engineering chapter had a booth with information about the area's cave systems, and a squeeze-box that gave visitors a simulated experience of crawling through a cave passage less than a foot tall.

At another booth, WKU civil engineering student Rebecca Hurley led a group of girls in the construction of spaghetti towers, with the uncooked noodles being held together with marshmallows.

Hurley, current president of the student chapter of the WKU American Society of Civil Engineers, said that growing up on a farm gave her an interest in the hands-on work of civil engineering, and she hoped the girls who visited her booth left with an expanded knowledge of the career possibilities ahead of them.

“I want to get them to think outside the box,” said Hurley, a junior from Park City. “I want them to be aware of as many options as possible before they get to high school.”

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SLIDE SHOW: Women of past, present, future celebrated at Herstory@WKU girl empowerment event

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