



Sgt. Bernice Booglee (above), an Army aviator and helicopter mechanic, put on a mask as part of her get-up for the "Olympics" after a luncheon at the Northwest Kansas Technical College on Wednesday. Jennica Hartman, a roadway designer, maneuvered a remote control car through a maze.

Photos by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Girls learn of career possibilities in technology

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

Can I cover my pretty face with a mask and weld? Should I bring a new perspective to designing roads? Maybe the military needs a woman's touch?

These are some of the career choices facing young women today that were once taboo and, though now more accessible to women, are still considered to some degree

"men's work."

Wednesday, girls from seven area high schools got a glimpse into these careers from women who have been there as part of National Career and Technical Education Week at the Northwest Kansas Technical College.

Wednesday was Women in Technology Day at the college. Students from Goodland, St. Francis, Cheylin, Weskan, Atwood, Golden

Plains and Bethune, Colo., talked with instructors and students at the college and with women in male-dominated fields, including two graduates of the Goodland college.

Groups of girls got hands-on projects in several departments in the morning and heard from students and instructors about the programs, including engineering technology, computer graphics technology, carpentry, welding, automo-

tive technology and electrical technology. Ginger Rupp, health nurse for Colby Community College, who has a background in forensic nursing, did a demonstration on investigating a sexual assault.

The girls heard from six guest speakers at lunch: Dr. Megan Pearce, a Goodland dentist; Lt. Loretta Tackett of the Finney County Sheriff's Department; Sgt. Melissa Toole, a truck driver and Army recruiter; Sgt. Bernice Booglee, an Army helicopter mechanic; Jennica Hartman, a roadway designer with Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig in Centennial, Colo.; and Bobbi Brantley, a computer aided drafting technician at Carroll and Lange Inc., an engineering and land surveying company in Lakewood, Colo.

After lunch, the girls and the speakers participated in "Olympics" that had them putting on a suit, mask and gear and climbing a ladder, driving a remote-control car through a maze, eating crackers and whistling, drinking soda and belching, a basketball shoot and throwing a football through a hole.

During the hands-on demonstrations in the classrooms, Daniel Ordenez, engineering technology instructor, said the program is half drafting and half applied math. The school has the latest technology for computer-aided drafting, he said, besides teaching the students to draw by hand. Graduates go into civil, mechanical and architectural engineering, he said.

It's a good field for women to work, Ordenez said; they bring a

different perspective. And a lot of times, he said, the women make more than men with the same experience.

The demand for graduates is outstanding, he said. This year, 11 students are graduating, while there are 33 jobs available for them. The college has placed every student from the program for the past 40 years, Ordenez said.

The lowest any graduate started at was \$26,000 per year, he said, and that was for a small town. It's not unusual for them to start at as much as \$36,000.

There are advisory meetings at the college twice a year, Hartman said, where business people talk to the instructors about what the students need for the work force. The instructors listen, Hartman said.

Women talk about jobs

Dr. Megan Pearce said she started out wanting to be an orthodontist, but then while in undergraduate school decided to be a dentist. She said dentistry allows more flexibility and gives her time with her family.

Today, she works two days a week for Dr. Terry Imel in Goodland.

Dentistry is challenging, Pearce said, and uses artistic skills, designing smiles, and it uses hands. She said one advantage of being a woman is that people tend to view her as more nurturing and gentle than male dentists.

Pearce advised the girls touring the Northwest Kansas Technical College to get in a position to at least shadow someone on the job when they are interested in a career. That way, they will know it is for them before going to college.

Lt. Loretta Tackett of Garden City, a lieutenant with the Finney County sheriff's department, said she has been in her field for 28 years. When she began, Tackett said, there were no woman officers on the road. The sheriff didn't believe in having women on patrol.

Tackett said she worked in the office for 15 years before women really had a chance to be on the road. When she wanted to be a detective, Tackett said, some discouraged her and told her she should stay in the office. But that wasn't what she wanted.

Tackett said she wanted to do what the men were doing, investigating crimes and sitting on stakeouts.

Sgt. Melissa Toole, an Army recruiter from Dodge City, said she knew she wanted to be a soldier

when she was 9 years old, but her mother said no daughter of hers would be a soldier. Then she wanted to be an over-the-road truck driver, and her mother told her to pick a career suitable for a young lady.

When she was 24, Toole said, she was selling cars, another male-dominated field, when she talked with a man at work who had served in the military. The more they talked, she said, the more she realized what she really wanted.

Toole said she decided she was living her life according to someone else's standards. She went to an Army recruiter, who recommended the reserves, so she could still have a normal life.

While in the reserves, Toole went to truck-driving school and drove trucks for the Army. Now she is a recruiter.

corrections

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