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# Carpinteria girls prepare for college, careers

By **Marissa Nall**

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The inaugural cohort of the Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka program is heading into its final year of college and business prep strategies.

Eureka takes girls in high school through a college training curriculum with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math, leadership and professional development. It was started four years ago, when the Carpinteria chapter of Girls Inc. discovered that only 20 to 25 percent of area high school graduates were college ready.

"We did some interviews, we met with a few board members, parents, (Santa Barbara City College), and this was the need," Executive Director Victoria Juarez said.

"We're now serving 69 girls and we're really excited about it because we know that the program is changing the trajectory of the girls' lives. Many of them will be the first in their family to go to college."

During the school year, participants attend monthly meetings and visit the UC Santa Barbara campus to help them with STEM enrichment and personal development, including things like healthy relationships, goal setting and "sports and adventure" activities.

"The goal there is to really make the girls feel ownership of the college campus," program director Jessica Wetzel said. "So, usually by their second year there, they are like 'Oh, this is my school. I'm a UCSB girl.'"

Last year, the girls presented ideas for business externships in fields of interest to them. The Eureka program then matched them up with small businesses in the

Santa Barbara area, where they were mentored and experienced a professional work environment while earning a stipend and scholarship.

Joyce Donaldson, president and CEO of the Carpinteria Chamber of Commerce, participated in an externship, which is short-term job shadowing, and said it was beneficial both to her office and to her extern, Lupita Echeverria.

"I was looking for somebody that could assist with office operations ... and then also what we could do to help introduce her to the business community," Donaldson said. "She was able to get into different businesses to see how they operated and meet face to face with business owners."

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## EUREKA

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Echeverria continues to work for the chamber office as a paid intern. She said she aims to major in business at Stanford University.

"I've learned a lot about school but also how to be more strong and, as a young adult, how to be more confident," Echeverria said.

Jill Kingdon, chief operating officer of Dowitcher Designs, a Santa Barbara-based marketing company, brought on Tahis Alcantar as an extern through Eureka. As a woman-owned business, Kingdon said, it helped the company live up to its core beliefs of empowering women and girls.

Tahis learned industry-specific skills like graphic design programs, branding and client relations while working on a logo and website for her family's agricultural business, Kingdon said.

"We also included her in the team discussions so she could see the communication between the team members," Kingdon said.

"We worked on a lot of computer skills because that's something the schools don't really offer anymore."

This year, the inaugural group went to Washington, D.C., to meet with Sens.



Participants in the Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's Eureka program met with Congresswoman Lois Capps at her office in Washington, D.C.

Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-Santa Barbara), where they lobbied for issues of importance to them, including college access, youth mentoring and health care.

They also did a tour of the Smithsonian, coding workshops with Microsoft and app development with the Discovery Channel.

Wetzel said one of the main goals of the tours was to introduce them to female sci-

entists and executives.

"We want the girls to be able to see themselves in people out in the work world so that they can envision their future as something a little bit brighter," Wetzel said.