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Rosie's Girls woodworking camp taking place in Northfield this week



Students take part in Rosie's Girls woodworking camp in Northfield this week.
Provided photo

NORTHFIELD — This week a group of middle school girls and gender non-conforming youth took part in a woodworking camp meant to show them what the trades are about.

The camp, called Rosie's Girls, is taking place at Northfield Middle High School. There are three versions of the camp: Rosie's Girls Build, which focuses on woodworking, Rosie's Girls Weld, which focuses on metal work, and Rosie's Girls STEAM, which focuses on a variety of career fields in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics. This week's camp focuses on woodworking. The camps, which take place all over the state, are put on by Vermont Works For Women and have been going on for 20 years.

Nell Carpenter is the camp coordinator for Rosie's Girls. Carpenter said for the woodworking and welding camps the students spend most of the week in the shop learning how to use power tools. She said the camps are there to show girls and gender non-conforming youth fields that are non-traditional for women.

There's also an empowerment piece. Carpenter said there's a social and emotional skill development curriculum in the camps targeted for middle school students. She said the curriculum focuses on things like body image, healthy relationships, making mistakes and building trust.

"We're both giving them the skills in the shop and the skills to kind of navigate society as it looks today. ... What we always say is that we don't expect all of our campers to become welders or carpenters or woodworkers or even really going into the trades. But by both getting their hands on power tools and in our social and emotional empowerment curriculum we hope that we expand their sense of what is possible for themselves whether they latch on what we're doing that week or not," she said.

Carpenter said when it comes to fields like carpentry and welding these students are seeing men doing those jobs. She said they'll see men in trade schools and most of their shop teachers will be men.

"There's an intimidation factor there. So they're just generally less likely to have worked with tools before. Young boys, that's just kind of part of growing up for them and that's not part of growing up for many girls," she said.

The camps costs \$350 for the week. Carpenter said there's financial aid available and those who apply for the camp can apply for the aid as well. She said those requesting financial aid tell the organization how much they can afford to spend on the camp and the organization will help them with the rest of the funds. She said the organization doesn't want cost to keep students from attending the camps.