

## Ingenuity helps boost kids' engineering interest

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NEW PALTZ — Scientists and engineers did whatever they could to get students' attention Wednesday, even if it meant making pickles glow.

Nearly 500 students participated in the "New Faces in Engineering" event at SUNY New Paltz, designed to spark interest in engineering careers. Twenty-four schools from Dutchess, Ulster, Orange and Rockland counties participated in the sessions, tied to National Engineers Week.

One of the features of the day was a "Jolts and Volts"

electricity show by John Cohn, an IBM engineer and researcher. Sporting a tie-dyed lab coat, Cohn sent 110 volts of electricity through a pickle, causing it to light up.

In another building, students assembled circuits for voice modulator devices, where they could change their voices by speaking into microphones.

### Choices supported

For some high school students like Chris Hatfield, 18, it confirmed a career choice. Hatfield, a senior at Goshen High School, plans to major in mechanical engineering at

the University of Hartford.

"It's something I was interested in," he said.

For younger students still in junior high, the day planted seeds, getting students to think about careers.

"It makes you feel like you are an engineer," said Amanda Brown, 14, and an eighth-grader at Haviland Middle School in Hyde Park.

"I didn't know you could do so much with boards and wires," Brown said, as she finished her voice modulator. "With a little bit of hard work, you can figure it out."

Her classmate, Brittany

Lang, 14, said, "It's fun to communicate ... to each other in different voices."

Engineering professor Baback Izadi said he simply had to get students started. After that, it was hard to slow them down.

"It was wonderful. They loved it," Izadi said.

While exposing students to engineering careers, it was also a way of introducing students to SUNY New Paltz's engineering program. It has 170 undergraduate and 30 graduate students, said John Harrington, dean of the School of Science and Engineering.