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dean of science and engineering, State University of New York at New Paltz

Engineering Day draws 1,000 students

SUNY: Field not for men only

By Erikah Haavie
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NEW PALTZ — As an engineer, Jill Holz designs tools.

Her tools will be taken by NASA astronauts to work on the Hubble Space Telescope nearly 400 miles above Earth.

The telescope is about the size of a large school bus floating in space, said Holz, who manages Hubble robotics for the National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

Holz was one of the engineers on hand Wednesday at the State University of New York at New Paltz's Engineering Day. About 1,000 students from 30 local schools attended the event, designed to introduce students to careers in engineering fields. Students from grades 7-12 participated in the event, now in its fourth year.

John Harrington, dean of science and engineering at the college, said he wanted students to start thinking about engineering early.

"They're filled with energy. This is the time to excite them" about careers in math, science and engineering, he said.

Dispelling manly myth

The college also wants to dispel the idea engineering is only a field for men.

"Girls around this age shy away from math and science," said Lou Gibson, eighth-grade guidance counselor at Poughkeepsie Middle School.

He brought about 10 Poughkeepsie Middle students who have been participating in IBM's program for girls, Exploring Interests in Technology and Engineering.

"It was cool. You can learn and have fun at the same time," Ariel Feliz, 13, said.

Konstance Parker, 13, wasn't sure if she'd want to be a full-time engineer. "Maybe a job on the side,"



Leo Ferris/Poughkeepsie Journal

Roy C. Ketcham High School students Erin Jedlicka, left, and Rachael Field work on building a fiber optics communications link during an engineering workshop Wednesday during Engineering Day at SUNY New Paltz.

On the Web

■ For engineering programs at SUNY New Paltz, visit: www.newpaltz.edu/sse

■ For details about National Engineers Week, visit: www.eweek.org

she said.

Elaine Houston, a 17-year-old senior at John Jay High, said she plans to major in engineering and go into the prosthetics field.

She's a coach for Lego League, a newly formed local group of students

who are designing, building and programming robots to proceed through obstacle courses.

They'll compete in an event at Pace University next month.

It's an engineering activity students can get

involved in now, said Casimer DeCusatis, a distinguished engineer at IBM in Poughkeepsie.

SUNY New Paltz offers undergraduate and graduate programs in engineering. About 160 students are enrolled.

Harrington said he hopes to recruit more students from the Hudson Valley to the SUNY New Paltz engineering programs.

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