

Fostering the education of girls interested in science

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Middle-school girls in the Tulane GIST (Girls in STEM) program interact at the New Life in Buried Bones workshop, asking questions and seeking knowledge about anthropology. It was one of 14 workshops offered by GIST, a program of the Tulane School of Science and Engineering, on Nov. 14 on the Tulane University uptown campus. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

Middle-school girls stared wide-eyed at the collections of skulls and other bones lying around them. The New Life in Buried Bones session was their last workshop of the day.

The Tulane [Girls in STEM](#) (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program hosted 14 workshops on Saturday (Nov. 14) on a wide variety of topics for girls in grades five through eight. Tulane faculty and students who are passionate about their subjects hoped to inspire girls to discover subjects they might be interested in.

"I always thought "What do you want to be when you grow up?" is an aggravating question," said Rachel Witt, leader of the bones workshop. Witt is in the Tulane doctoral program for [biological anthropology](#), and through teaching the workshop she hopes to let young girls know about a field she finds incredibly interesting.

"I want kids to see that anthropology is a major that applies to every aspect of life."

During the program on Saturday, Witt explained to the group, "STEM is all about seeing interesting fields and figuring out which you like."

The girls in the program kept stopping the presentation to ask questions and to make comments about the bones around them.

"I'm interested in science a lot, and I took classes today on primates and endophytes, which are like fungi," said Camille Fuselier, 10, talking about the things she enjoyed about the program.

At the end of the class, the girls got to look at a real mummy. The awe on their faces held glints of excitement and anticipation.

"The mummy was super cool," said Olivia Lyman when asked about her favorite part of the workshop. "I love science a lot ? it's really interesting."

Other Saturday workshops focused on topics such as physics (Fluids, Bubbles and Slime), neuroscience (Using Your Brains) and chemical and biomolecular engineering (Polymer Hydrogels, which demonstrated what makes diapers absorbent).

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