



CH2M HILL chemist Angela Dippold explains the workings of a prototype carbon filter scrubbing project to Lebanon High students Jenn Cherry, left, and Brittany Port during the third annual Women in Technology program held Friday morning at the company's headquarters in Corvallis. (Alex Paul/Democrat-Herald)

WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY

CORVALLIS — Sue Frey was one of only two females among 400 civil engineering students at Indiana's Purdue University in the mid-1970s.

"Now, your opportunities are limitless," Frey told 14 female Lebanon High School students who spent Friday morning rubbing elbows with engineers, interior designers, chemists and biologists at the company's Corvallis headquarters.

In 1977, Frey was the second female engineer hired at CH2M HILL. Today, 25 to 30 percent of the company's 26,000 employees are women, many of them engineers. This was third annual Women in Technology event held with Lebanon students.

Frey told the students she specializes in structural engineering such as buildings and large hydraulic reservoirs.

"It's fun to take math and science and turn them into a building, to make math come alive," Frey said.

She added that CH2M HILL employees — regardless of their job title — "are really problem solvers."

Frey said when men in her hometown of Gary, Ind. learned she was studying engineering; some encouraged her father to make her change majors because "I would be taking away a job from a man. He never told me until after I got my masters."

Frey encouraged the students to "find your interest and strengths" and then figure out what job matches them.

Frey said she enjoys her job because it is so diverse. She is also teaching an engineering class at Oregon State for seniors and graduate students.

Chemist Angela Dippold explained the workings of a carbon filter scrubbing prototype to LHS freshmen Jenn Cherry, 14, and Brittany Port, 15. "I'm interest in biology," Cherry said. "Probably something in the medical field."

Port admitted she didn't know what career interests her, but is open to exploring. Both girls agreed the event was fun and eye-opening.

Kenzie Antila, 16, and Rachel Mason, 14, learned there are interesting jobs in interior design from Carrie Steen.

"I work with everything from furnishings to finishes," Steen said. "I work collaboratively with other departments, especially architects."

Antila said she is considering a career in medicine, but "science is definitely creeping its way up my list."

"There's so much to learn here," Mason said. "I'm interested in science and biology, but I don't know what job yet."

Science teacher and chaperone Becky Lippman called the program "awesome."

"It's a great way to give kids real-world experience and see what's out there in terms of real jobs, and that it takes collaboration with other people."

Program co-founder Gregg Thompson said the opportunities for engineering careers are nearly endless.

"We see a strong future for these young people," Thompson said. "There are so many careers — computer-aided drafting techs, engineers, scientists, managers — there is so much variety."

In addition to Cherry, Port, Antila and Rachel Mason, student participants included Nickole Johnson, Alyona O'Hara, Elizabeth Denver, Corey Kutsch, Hanna Silverman, Jessica Alvarez, Anna Mason, Minnie O'Grady, Chyenne Kempton and Mary Beth Piper.

CH2M HILL was founded in 1946 by an OSU professor and three of his students. Now a Fortune 500 company, it manages projects on every continent except Antarctica and has revenues of nearly \$6 billion.

Among its nearly 10,000 current projects are the \$5.3 billion expansion of the Panama Canal, a \$14 billion project for the 2012 Olympics in London and a \$22 billion construction of a zero-carbon city in Abu Dhabi.

Alex Paul, Albany Democrat-Herald (May 8, 2010)