nPower Gorge Girls 2021

In an effort to help support and increase the Career Awareness opportunities for female students in the Columbia Gorge region, the South Central STEM Network partnered with Career Connect Southwest, First Nations MESA, and STEM professionals in the Columbia River Gorge to develop and implement the nPower Gorge Girls Project. Meeting the needs of our most rural students presents its own set of unique challenges when it comes to providing access to Career Connected Learning (CCL) opportunities, and the chance to explore STEM career pathways. These students often find themselves far from the businesses or professionals they would like to learn more about. The barriers of distance, transportation-related expenses, and lack of personal connection can prove to be insurmountable. Enter the nPower Gorge Girls Project. In each after school session the participating middle school girls:

- Are introduced to new careers and women working in that field who look like them, live where they live, and identify with the communities that support them,
- Meet other girls from the Columbia Gorge region who are also interested in STEM,
- Participate in fun, hands-on career exploration through authentic project-based learning, and
- Receive a mini-design challenge kit to explore the skills needed in the featured career

The success of the nPower Gorge Girls project depends on the commitment of STEM professionals from the region. These volunteers develop authentic work-based challenges and share their stories, giving the girls the opportunity to learn about possible STEM career pathways. We are so thankful for the women who partnered with us on this exciting project. Maza Brady is an example of one of these dedicated professionals. Maza works as a Mechanical Engineer at Trillium Engineering in Hood River, Oregon. She shared her story of what initially interested her about engineering, what classes she enjoyed, what course of study she pursued, and what challenges she faced. The nPower Gorge Girls Project is an example of a data-driven opportunity to increase female interest and participation in STEM career pathways.