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Women In Engineering event hosted at Ansonia Middle School

By Ralph Villers
Photos by Ansonia Schools

ANSONIA – Several Sikorsky Aircraft engineers recently gave 60 female Ansonia Middle School students an overview of career possibilities in the field of engineering.

The Feb. 23 virtual event was part of the Women in Engineering program, designed to introduce students to careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

John LaRovera, the district’s math and science administrator, arranged for the two-day program. Assisting him were School Superintendent Dr. Joseph DiBacco, and Steve Bergin, Assistant Superintendent.

Students learned about the numerous careers available at the Stratford-based Sikorsky, a division of Lockheed Martin Corp. But it was building a model of an Air Force F-22 Raptor that

really got them engaged.

Before assembling the fighter models, the students gathered to learn theory behind the principles of lift and fixed and rotary winged craft flight.

Armed with this new knowledge, they built model gliders of Lockheed’s F-22 Raptor.

The class assembled the gliders, with step by step instructions on constructing the lightweight aircraft provided virtually by a Sikorsky engineer.

Afterwards, flight tests of their creations commenced in the hallway.

Naturally, some students’ creations did not fly through the air with the greatest of ease.

However, finding out why airworthiness was not achieved as

expected allowed the builders to fix their creations.

AMS Principal Peter Colaccino said they used some of the new language they had learned, such as “the plane is flying nose heavy.”

DiBacco and Bergin teamed up to assemble an F-22 glider. DiBacco wouldn’t disclose if it was airworthy. He said, “Let’s just say it was a learning experience. But it was a lot of fun to see the students enjoying themselves!”

Eighth grader Alleyanna Figueroa said, “I was glad to be able to participate.” Her uncle is an engineer, she said, and she didn’t know what his job entailed, but now is interested in learning more.

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(Right) Bergin and DiBacco work on their glider



Madison Crockett holds up the mold of the glider, awaiting further instructions.



A student examines her finished product.



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The *Women in Engineering Program* is one of the district’s STEM-related initiatives.

There are plans to repurpose the schools’ media centers to serve as “makerspaces,” in which students can learn about STEM with hands on activity centers.

LaRovera said they will be establishing a robotics program at the middle and high schools in the near future.

All of these activities directly connect and lead into the career ***Pathway Programs*** and career and technical education classes at Ansonia High.

“There will be hundreds of thousands of jobs – some of which haven’t been created yet – available in STEM fields,” LaRovera said. “Many of these jobs in the past traditionally have been filled by males, but the trend is that anyone and everyone can pursue these careers. You can have a high profile job, regardless of gender.”

Colaccino said he received many positive comments from the students about building their own model gliders.

“I hope that the students make the connection and learn that the opportunities are endless, if they want to pursue an engineering career,” he said.

See more about the the day from WTNH News 8 [HERE.](#)

