

HOW STEM GIRLS BLOSSOM

One Student's Geek Squad Summer Success

Emily Tecuanhuehue started school this year at Escalante a much different child than when she got out last June. This school year she has more confidence and suddenly feels she could be one of the "smart kids," a far cry from how she felt last year. What made the difference? According to Becca Hodgkinson, sixth grade teacher at Escalante Elementary in the Glendale area of Salt Lake City, "Emily spent two days in August at the Geek Squad Academy in JA City and she just blossomed. She was surprisingly quick to pick up programming and other tech skills she'd never been introduced to before. So the Geek Squad presenters asked her to help teach the other students in the class . . . her peers. And her self-confidence skyrocketed." Emily was one of 40 Escalante students to receive a full scholarship to the two-day camp sponsored by Junior Achievement of Utah. Her mother was very grateful for the change in Emily, but since she speaks no English, she could only express her gratitude through a big hug to Ms. Hodgkinson, who coordinated Geek Squad Academy registration and transportation for the Escalante students.

Christy Tribe, CEO of Junior Achievement, said, "We know we can always fill our STEM camps with paying students whose parents are aware of the opportunities for educational experiences for their children. But we feel a special responsibility to help level the playing field for the many students in Salt Lake's at-risk and Title I schools who wouldn't ordinarily have these kinds of opportunities. By offering full scholarships to these students (30 of them were girls!), we hope to spark an interest in technology and help build the confidence that they can succeed in STEM fields, thus getting them in the pipeline to fill future jobs in Utah's burgeoning tech industry."

We are grateful to Hill Air Force Base and the STEM Action Center for sponsoring our summer STEM camps. And thanks to the many sponsors who help us offer Junior Achievement programs to Utah's deserving students.



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