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## Local/Vermont

Wednesday, July 11, 2007

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### Rosie's Girls learn tech skills

Published: Wednesday, July 11, 2007

By Matt Ryan  
Free Press Staff Writer

ESSEX JUNCTION -- The scream of a table saw tears through the musty room where 12-year-old Chelsea Stygles' birdhouse nears completion.

Stygles uses a speed square and tape measure to determine the pitch of her birdhouse's roof. It's the last day of carpentry class at Rosie's Girls Summer Program at the Center for Technology, and she isn't wasting time on aesthetics.

"Nothing fancy," Stygles said of her project. "I might stain it, but I don't think I'm going to paint it."

Stygles, who used a chop saw and drill during construction, said she's comfortable wielding power tools.

"The table saw scared me the most, because your fingers are so close to it," Stygles said.



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Chelsea Stygles, 12, of Milton measures wood as she makes a birdhouse at Rosie's Girls Summer Program in Essex Junction on Tuesday.

ALISON REDLICH, Free Press



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Stygles and 23 other 11- to 13-year-old girls are enrolled in the summer day camp, founded by Vermont Works for Women, a local nonprofit organization. The camp, established in 2000, is named after Rosie the Riveter, a World War II icon used to recruit women to work in defense plants. Its programs are designed to teach girls trade skills and introduce them to female professionals, to help them build and maintain self-esteem.

"This age period is very important," said Kristen Mullins, Vermont Works for Women's director of programs. "It's a time a lot of girls lose their self-confidence."

For three weeks the girls learn carpentry, welding, electrical wiring, bike repair and auto repair.

"These are activities that a lot of people have fear around, and we want to break that down," Mullins said. "It's an incredible thing to know that you can change the physical world around you."

Tuition costs \$275, though the organization provides financial aid, Mullins said. Despite hazards such as blades and blowtorches, Mullins said the camp is safe. Staff members assist the girls with more dangerous equipment, like the table saw.

"Burned fingers with a glue gun are our most common injury," Mullins said.


Maria Dustira, 13, powered a jigsaw with a bandaged thumb and finger she burned holding hot metal during welding class.

"I left my hand on it for a while until I realized it was, like, sizzling," Dustira said.

Elizabeth Babcock said welding was her favorite class.

"I like melting things together," she said.

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"They use a chop saw their first day, so they get comfortable," said Amy Judd, who leads the carpentry class. "By Week 3, the staffers feel pretty useless."

Judd founded Plane Jane Builders five years ago in Essex Junction. She started carpentry about eight years ago through a Vermont Works for Women Step Up program.


In addition to individual projects, the girls worked together to create a bookcase for the Northern Lights House in Burlington, Judd said. The building houses female offenders released from Vermont's correctional system.

Judd and most of the staff are paid, though some staff members volunteer, Mullins said.

The Essex Junction camp celebrates a closing ceremony Friday, the day another camp opens in Barre. Contact Matt Ryan at 651-4849 or [mryan@bfp.burlingtonfreepress.com](mailto:mryan@bfp.burlingtonfreepress.com)

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