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Teachers seek new frontiers at space workshop

Three-day session explores ways to inspire students to consider careers in math, science, engineering.

By Walter Yost -- Bee Staff Writer

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Jessica Denning, an eighth-grade teacher at Rio Tierra Junior High in North Sacramento, helps construct a model of a space vehicle that would collect soil from other worlds.

Photo: Sacramento Bee/José Luis Villegas

They won't likely be offered jobs with NASA anytime soon, but Annette Miller and her team of teachers were proud of the space exploration vehicle they made of plastic straws and beverage lids, a discarded Starbucks cup and a cheap red balloon.

Construction of the model vehicle, dubbed "the Venus rover," required a basic knowledge of math and science, teamwork and the ability to communicate with others.

Miller was among 50 teachers from across the country who attended "Passport to the Future," a three-day teacher workshop at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento sponsored by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

For Miller and her colleagues, the little construction project was part of an exercise about how to use space-related activities to inspire students to consider careers in science, math, engineering and technology.

"This is a fun way to problem-solve," said Miller, a teacher at Madison Elementary School in North Highlands. This fall, she'll challenge her students to construct their own model space vehicles out of odds and ends.

The goal of the workshop was to help K-12 educators explain the aerospace industry to their students and find ways to interest young people, especially girls, in the field.

Teachers such as Miller got to share ideas with aerospace professionals, try hands-on teaching techniques and hear a speech by Apollo astronaut Ken Mattingly.

**For More Information About
Future Teacher Workshops Contact Lisa Bacon
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