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Photo / Donna Coveney

Incoming high school freshman Arysa of Randolph, Mass., gets a little hands-on help understanding Lego genetics from Amy Fitzgerald of the Edgerton Center. Arysa was at MIT for You Go Girl!, a science program for girls in the Greater Boston area.

Edgerton program's message is You Go Girl!

Sasha Brown, News Office
August 4, 2006

Learning the genetics of fish built out of Legos was just one experiment on the agenda this week for girls visiting the Edgerton Center at MIT.

For eight years the Edgerton Center has sponsored a four-day program called You Go Girl! which focuses on hands-on science and exploration activities for girls in the Greater Boston area who will be entering ninth grade in the fall.

The program, which ran from July 31 to Aug. 3, was the brainchild of Daniele Lantagne, an MIT student who was looking for an opportunity to expose young girls both to science and to certain life skills they would need as they entered high school.

This year 21 girls were at MIT for the week. "The idea is to expose girls to a variety of engineering and science fields by running them through some hands-on activities in the different disciplines," said Amy Fitzgerald, a technical instructor in the Edgerton Center and the director of the program.

The girls have varied backgrounds. "Some (of the girls) love science, some hate it, some are heading off to private high schools, many to the local urban high," said Fitzgerald. In the morning, they work in small groups on projects in science or engineering.

This year the girls explored mechanical engineering -- building motorized Lego cars, which they also programmed using software from the Media Lab. Other

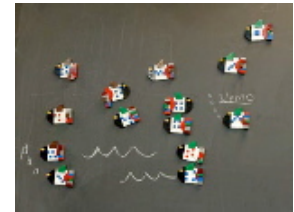


Photo / Donna Coveney

High school girls visiting MIT for the You Go Girl! program learned about genetics using fish built of Legos. After learning about meiosis and mitosis, sperm and eggs, the girls made their own generations of fish, discovering something about phenotypes and recessive and dominant genes along the way. [Enlarge image](#)



Photo / Donna Coveney

A You Go Girl! participant works on her Lego fish on Aug. 2. [Enlarge image](#)



Photo / Donna Coveney

Sherianna of Hyde Park, Mass., works with Amy Fitzgerald of the Edgerton Center during the You Go Girl! program Aug. 2. [Enlarge image](#)

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activities centered on electrical and chemical engineering.

One biology activity called for the girls to use Lego models to visualize cell division and meiosis. "The girls learn about the variation within a species as they look at a series of generations of a 'Lego fish' as it breeds," Fitzgerald said.

The afternoon component of the program is geared toward self-esteem and self-awareness, Fitzgerald said.

The owner of a local karate dojo conducted a self-defense workshop; an educator from Planned Parenthood discussed communication and relationships; and the last day, the girls talked about their "hopes and fears as they approach entering a high school environment," Fitzgerald said.

[You Go Girl!](#) - Edgerton Center, MIT

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