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new skills: engineering with cookie containers

Local Girl Scouts build Olympic-themed creations out of cookie boxes

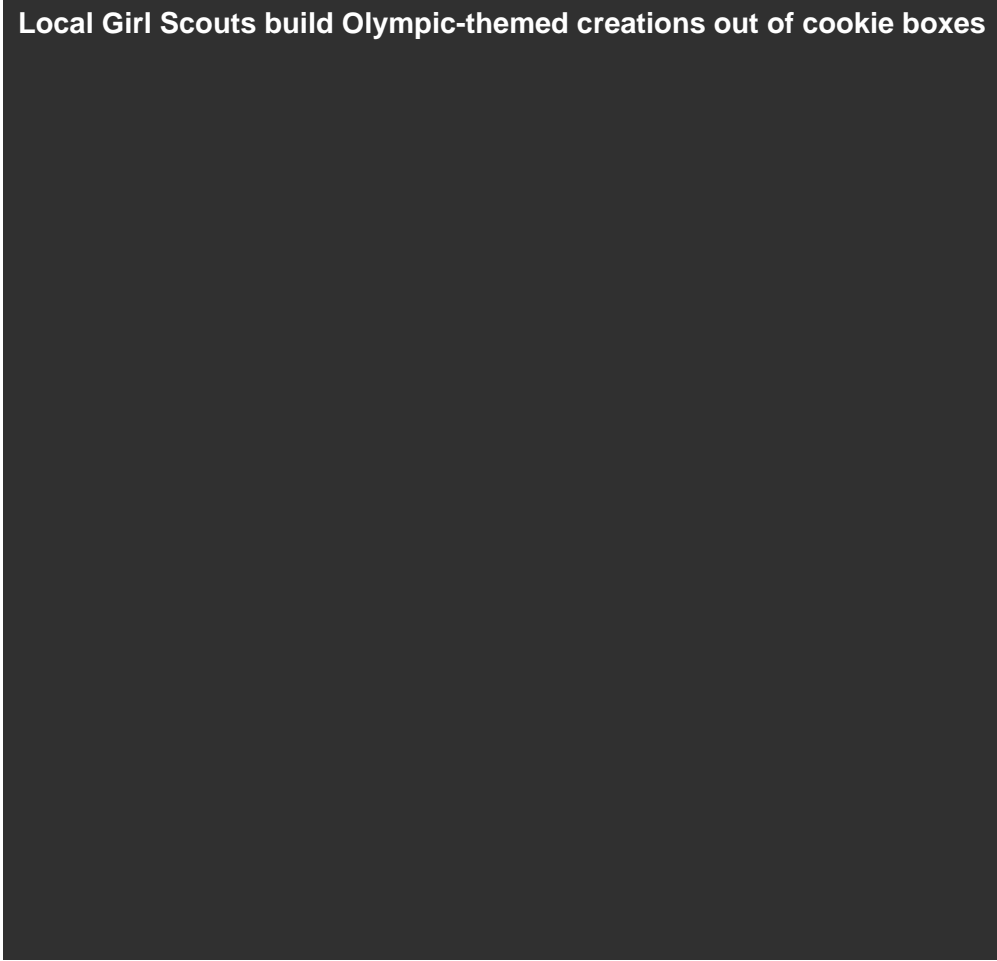
■ Girl Scouts build Olympic-themed creations

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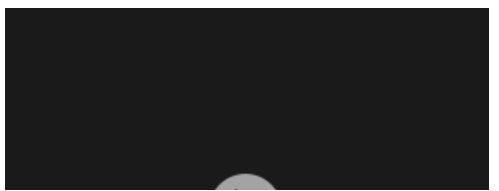


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Girl Scouts Amanda Lease (left), 14, from Bixby, and Sarah Bowlin, 17, from Bixby, attempt to move their Winter Olympics "cauldron" made from cookie boxes during a competition at Hardesty Regional Library on Saturday. JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

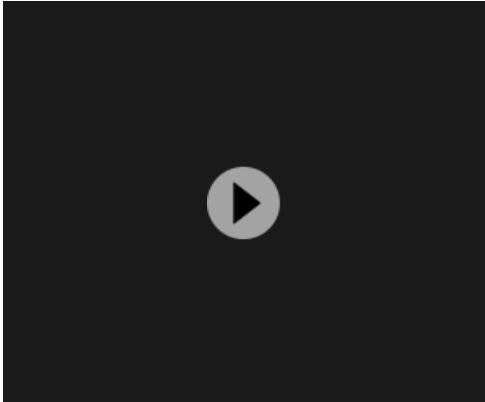
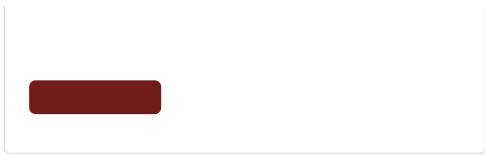
Posted: Sunday, January 26, 2014 12:00 am | Updated: 11:13 am, Sun Jan 26, 2014.



By DAVID HARPER World Staff Writer | 0 comments

At the upcoming Winter Olympics, teams of international athletes will work together as they combine their talents in order to achieve a common goal.

On Saturday at the Hardesty Regional Library, teams of local Girl Scouts displayed teamwork and resourcefulness in a similar way.



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Members of Girl Scout Troop 557 including Erika Burkman, 16 (left), from Tulsa, and Delaney Oltman, 15, from Tulsa, construct a Winter Olympic-themed structure from Girl Scout cookie boxes during a competition at Hardesty Regional Library in Tulsa on Saturday. Various Girl Scout troops were in competition to build designs tied to an Olympic theme, using approximately 3,000 cookie boxes to bring their free-standing creations to life. JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

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Girls ranging in ages from 11 to 17 divided into teams to create Olympic-themed structures made up of repurposed Girl Scout cookie boxes.

The event not only promoted this year's Girl Scout cookie sale campaign National Girl Scout Cookie Day is Feb. 8 but also served to encourage the engineering skills of the 26 Tulsa-area girls who were taking part.

Each of the five teams had a female engineer or architect serving as an adviser to answer any technical questions that came up during the building process.

Abigail Wendt, a project manager at Magellan Midstream Partners, said she was happy to be part of an effort that demonstrated how engineering can be fun.

"It isn't just number crunching and equations," Wendt said. "There's a lot of creativity involved."

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Dana Whittaker, program coordinator for the Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma, said teams submitted their plans in November. Olympic-themed designs consisting of about 500 boxes each included re-creations of items such as figure skates; the iconic, interlocking Olympic rings; and the Olympic torch.

Miriam Ford, 14, said her Broken Arrow-based team was dealing with the challenge of how to get the flat edges of cookie boxes to convincingly replicate the shape of the bear used as a mascot for the Sochi games.

"Bears aren't boxy," Ford pointed out.

Ford said her parents are chemical engineers, but she still hasn't decided what her career plans are.

According to information provided by the organization, Girl Scouts is dedicated to introducing girls of every age to science, technology, engineering and math experiences relevant to everyday life.

Erika Burkman, 16, said she is already planning on majoring in mechanical engineering at Oklahoma State University. On Saturday, she was busily constructing a miniature bobsled course made out of cookie boxes as part of a team from Troop 557.

Delaney Oltman, 15, said she would like to be an artist instead of an engineer. Her role with the Troop 557 team had to do with making the bobsled-course structure look its best as it was being finalized.

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Oltman said she has been involved with scouting since first grade and said she plans to stick with it through high school.

Her mother, Marilyn Oltman, said she thinks scouting has been beneficial for her daughter "in more ways than she probably realizes."

Marilyn Oltman, who also serves as leader of Delaney's troop, said projects such as the one on Saturday demonstrate that though each of the girls is "amazingly different," they can use their respective talents for the common good.

Cheryl Palmer, leader of Troop 1395, said building the structures was a terrific way for girls, including her 14-year-old daughter Anna, to learn to work together and overcome any setbacks that may arise.

Not long into the start of Saturday's event, several boxes went crashing to the floor after 17-year-old Bixby High School student Sarah Bowlin spotted an early design flaw in the project of her team.

Bowlin, who said she has an interest in engineering as a career, was taking part in the project with her 13-year-old sister Hannah while their mom, Janine, looked on in her role as their troop leader.

Kristine Pagano, who volunteered to be the mentor for the Bowlin team through the Tulsa Alliance for Engineering, said things are continuing to change for the better in fields like engineering and architecture when it comes to gender diversity.

Christina Callas, a mechanical engineer who was serving as a mentor for Ford's team, said she hopes that Saturday's event helped girls realize the professional options open to them.

Whittaker said that organizers are already planning to hold a similar event next year with "Oklahoma icons" taking over as the theme in what will be a non-Olympic year.

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