

2016 EXPLORING ENGINEERING ACADEMY

By Nikki Welch



A tour through Georgia Power gave students the chance to participate in Virtual Reality demonstrations.

For 16 years now, the Exploring Engineering Academy has provided a week of STEM-related group tours, presentations and hands-on learning for high school students on the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) campus. The volunteer-led effort is co-sponsored by the Boy Scouts of America and the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME).



Delta, one of the many companies involved in supporting the Exploring Engineering Academy, gave students a tour through its Technical Operations Center.

“We want to expose students to engineering and what it’s all about,” says volunteer Ray Willcocks. In order to achieve a complete immersion into engineering around Atlanta, the volunteers put together a schedule for the week which included tours of the forthcoming SunTrust Stadium, the Federal Reserve, Falcons Stadium, Atlanta Watershed,

Porsche Plant and the Georgia Aquarium. Other companies involved in educational presentations included: Delta, Novalis, Toto, Six Flags, General Electric, the Museum of Design Atlanta and, of course, Georgia Tech.

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“The companies are so accommodating and bring their best and brightest to talk to the students,” says Aisha Stith, Exploring Executive with the Boy Scouts of America. With such a diverse selection of engineering and technology companies on the agenda, the students are not only exposed to the many different sectors of engineering, but also get to experience some special behind-the-scenes features. “The students were the first to get a group tour of the Porsche plant and were able to see the construction phase happening at SunTrust Park. They also experienced a VIP access tour with the engineers who helped build the aquarium,” says Stith.

Both Willcocks and Stith agree that the program draws a group of students who

are incredibly engaged and interested in all aspects of the engineering industry. “The quality of the kids who attend is unbelievable,” notes Willcocks. Stith adds, “There’s a lot of interest in this program – way beyond what we can accommodate. There were 100 families on the waiting list this year.”



Students were able to test drive Porsche vehicles on simulated tracks at the Porsche Experience Center in Atlanta during the week-long program.

The program has definitely experienced significant growth recently. “This year, we had 23 out of the 62 students who represent different minorities, both ethnicities and gender; each year we try to increase the number of young ladies who participate,” says Stith.

The Exploring Engineering Academy is the largest of the 12 STEM-related Exploring Programs in Georgia. “It’s a phenomenal program and I think we could do it on a much larger scale in the future,” says Stith.