

Engineering student credits STEPS for her success

In 1997, when **Brianne Hartung** first saw the poster for University of Wisconsin-Stout's Science Technology and Engineering Preview Summer camp for girls (STEPS) hanging in her sixth grade classroom, she thought, "Oh, that looks fun. I'll get to go swimming and biking."

Little did she know that her experience at STEPS would be so much more fulfilling and, in fact, change her life forever.

STEPS is the signature youth program of the SME Education Foundation. Almost \$1.3 million has been invested in STEPS camps to inspire more than 3,600 young people to explore careers in manufacturing, engineering, science and technology. The week-long technology-based camps are held on college campuses, some of which are residential and tuition-free. They offer hands-on manufacturing experience to middle school and high school students.

"I never would have thought of going into engineering if it weren't for STEPS. No one in my family is an engineer," said Hartung. In fact, before her STEPS experience, she didn't even know what an engineer was.

The STEPS camp was Hartung's first time away from home, but she was "so busy doing fun stuff" that she handled the separation from her family with ease. When the camp ended, Hartung's excitement continued.

"I couldn't stop talking about it," said Hartung. "I came out of there so excited about what I had learned about math and science. I wanted to take as many science and math classes as I could."

"Hartung has told me many times that she would not be where she is today without STEPS—that it had a tremendous impact on her life," said **Pete Heimdahl**, executive director of STEPS for Girls (UW-Stout only) and associate dean of UW-Stout's College of Technology, Engineering and Management.

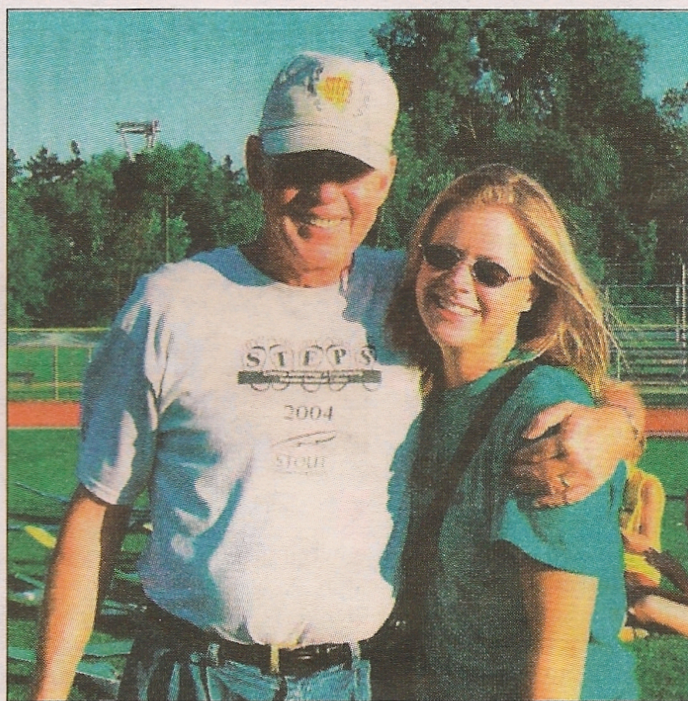
Three years later, the summer before

her sophomore year in high school, Hartung attended an advanced STEPS camp at the University of Minnesota. That same summer, Heimdahl invited her to be a junior camp counselor at the STEPS camp that she had attended several years before. She's been going back there every summer since, and is now a full-time counselor.

"As a STEPS camp counselor, I have seen the girls' self-esteem grow. I see their motivation, and the excitement in their eyes," said Hartung. "A week is not a very long time but at the end of it, the change in the girls is remarkable."

In her senior year of high school, Hartung started taking college-level engineering classes to round out her high school education. She took two computer-aided design courses, an introduction to manufacturing engineering class and a packaging engineering course at Stout. When she started college at Stout in fall 2003, she was one year ahead.

Now a sophomore at Stout, Hartung is studying packaging engineering (one of the majors emphasized by STEPS) and has received a great deal of recognition. She was the first recipient of the Kaitlyn Taylor Memorial Scholarship—awarded to a STEPS graduate who enrolls in a STEPS-approved program at Stout. As part of a three-person design team, she took first place in a national competition for innovative package design. And she was offered six different internships, choosing a semester-long internship at



STEPS founder, **Pete Heimdahl** (left), with STEPS camper, turned engineering student, **Brianne Hartung** (right).

Ecolab, Inc. in St. Paul, Minn.

Heimdahl credits Hartung as his inspiration to keep STEPS up and running.

"A couple of years ago, when I was feeling overburdened by the difficulties of planning and running the camps and raising funds to support them, I had tentatively decided to discontinue them," said Heimdahl, "but Brianne stopped in my office and reminded me of the importance of STEPS to a lot of people, including her. She single-handedly turned my thinking around. She won't let me have thoughts like this anymore."

STEPS was initiated in 1997 on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Stout under the sponsorship of SME's Education Foundation. STEPS camps are available in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and Illinois. For more information on STEPS, go to www.sme.org/foundation and click on "Youth Programs."