

# The Burlington Free Press

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By Sally Pollak  
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There's more power in a power tool than its ability to cut or drill.

Tools have the power, too, to strengthen a girl's confidence or expand her view of the world and place in it. This is the premise behind Rosie's Girls, a summer program for middle-school girls.

"A lot of boys said building things is just made for men," said Olivia Barkoski, 11, of Burlington. "I learned that girls can do everything if they just put their mind to it."

Rosie's Girls, based at the Center for Technology in Essex, teaches girls trade skills in a multi-faceted program that includes instruction in the arts and discussions about what it means to be a girl in our society, and what the expectations are for women.

"We're not trying to turn girls into carpenters," said co-director Rebecca Esch. "We're just trying to show them that they can do anything."

Esch has a doctorate in education with a focus on girls' adolescent development. She and her colleague, Liz Shayne, run a business, Strong Foundations, that develops programs for girls.

Rosie's Girls is a collaborative venture between Strong Foundations and Northern New England Tradeswomen. The aim was to create a program that would instill confidence in girls at precisely the age when, according to numerous studies, their self-assurance might start to wane.

As a former middle school teacher, Tiffany Bluemle, executive director of Northern New England Tradeswomen, witnessed a remarka-

## Rosie Girl power

### Teens build confidence as they learn construction skills



Free Press file photo

**Sculptor Kate Pond works with one of the girls from Rosie's Girls during a summer session.**

they'd fight me tooth and nail over something we read," she said. "By ninth grade, they'd hold up their hands and say, 'I may be totally wrong, but...'"

Rosie's Girls is a three-week summer program for girls aged 11 to 13. Each day, they receive instruction in two trades: carpentry and one other — such as welding, mechanics or electrical work. The girls also do arts projects, from poetry to stand-up

name from Rosie the Riveter, a mythical factory worker whose image was used to promote home-front production during World War II.

"We're trying to show them what they're capable of doing," Bluemle said. "It's an amazing feeling to be able to use a power tool and to feel like you really know what you're doing, and to assume that that's the kind of thing that everyone should

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### For more information

■ To find out more about Rosie's Girls, call 878-0004, Ext. 103

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At a Rosie's Girls reunion, one girl told Bluemle that she had bet her father \$20 that she could install the hardware to put up curtains. She won the bet.

The success of Rosie's Girls can be measured beyond an individual child: Rosie's Girls is going national. A pilot program started last summer in Santa Monica, Calif., and one is scheduled to begin next summer in New Jersey.

In addition, a training institute will open next summer at the Essex site for those interested in starting similar programs, Bluemle said.

"Rosie's Girls is a holistic approach to girls' adolescent development," Bluemle said. "We want to share it with more people."

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