

Luna to host Girls Can event

Initiative aims to encourage females to consider variety of education and career pathways

For the first time, Luna Community College will host Girls Can, which comes to campus on Wednesday, April 20.

Girls Can, an initiative of the American Association of University Women, will bring approximately 180 fifth-grade girls from school districts in San Miguel, Mora, Colfax and Guadalupe counties to the college for a day of presentations and activities.

Sixteen women, who have gone on to success in various fields, will be the featured presenters and will speak to the students about their experiences and opportunities available through education and career pathways.

Dr. Carol Linder, director of Luna's Allied Health Sciences Department, has been involved with Girls Can for years. She said having Luna as a venue for this year's event figures to open even more doors of opportunity for the students.

"The most exciting thing is this will be the first time they'll be exposed to the number of different trades we have at Luna," she said, noting that nursing, cosmetology, automotive technology and the commercial driver's license program are a few of the programs expected

to be represented.

"I've done this a number of years," Linder said. "It's a day for these girls to look at things they maybe haven't considered."

Carla Romero, another veteran educator, said the local AAUW chapter has been conducting the Girls Can event for more than 10 years in Las Vegas and San Miguel County. She pointed out that AAUW is focusing on reducing early gender bias and encouraging female students to pursue higher education – including fields of study to which they have not traditionally been steered.

"Each year we try to include more girls in the northern region of New Mexico," she said. "For the past two events, we brought the girls to NMHU to experience a day in college. This year ... the girls will attend several hands-on presentations by 16 female professionals – a surgeon, forestry experts, geology experts, IT experts, a musician, a mechanic, a criminologist, a nurse practitioner, an expert on sustainability, a cosmetologist, and a mathematician."

Romero said she grew up in Wagon Mound and while she encountered good role models such as teachers and principals, there were many more potential career fields to which she and others had little to no exposure.

"We want (Girls Can participants) to think girls can be anything they want to be, as long as

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Dr. Carol Linder
Allied Health Sciences Director,
Luna Community College

they work at it," Romero said. "They shouldn't limit themselves. They shouldn't limit the careers they pursue."

"It's extremely important," agreed Dr. Mary Shaw, a longtime science professor and one of the event organizers along with Romero and Linder. "I don't think students have any idea of all the careers available to them—or of the training that's available. That includes not only the university programs but the two-year programs. Society has needs for different things. We need electricians just as much as we need doctors."

United World College-USA President Victoria J. Mora and local AAUW President Barbara Perea Casey are among those expected to be featured speakers.

Luna's Montanas del Norte Area Health Education Center has agreed to offer financial support to make the event possible for more students. Romero said the grant funding has allowed AAUW to expand its reach beyond Las Vegas to other communities in the region.