Everyone Does IT event focuses on girls.

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Los Alamos National Laboratory and community advocates who teach youth about technology joined forces to present Everyone Does IT on March 21 at Los Alamos Nature Center. Everyone Does IT will be an ongoing effort led by the Laboratory that aims to excite and inform people about information technology, especially girls and others who are largely underrepresented in the IT field.

Participants from the community included the Los Alamos chapter of CoderDojo, Los Alamos Maker Space, Supercomputing Challenge, and Queen of the Hill. Also involved are the Laboratory's women's employee resource groups—Women in Computing and Atomic Women—which encourage involvement from the community. The event was supported by the Laboratory's Community Partnerships Office and Los Alamos National Security, LLC.

"It's fun to work this kind of event because you put this technology in kids' hands and they love it," says VISIBLE Team member Chris Carter, who helped testers into the headset and showed them how the controllers allow interaction in a virtual environment.

David Kratzer with the Lab's High Performance Computing Environment Division was part of the team that started the Supercomputing Challenge in 1990. Back then, he says, about 25 percent of the participants were girls; now girls make up about 40 percent. "We have to get girls interested at a younger age to build confidence. Also, it helps to give them their own things to try," Kratzer says. "Girls want to analyze fetal heart beat rates and track sequoia survival rates, while boys want to shoot things."

The Lab's Associate Director for Theory, Simulation, and Computation John Sarrao encouraged attendees to support the early education opportunities offered at the event, stating, "Developing this talent starts at an early age. Everyone Does IT is a key initiative in this effort."

A segment from the film "CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap," which encourages young women and minorities to learn to code and pursue careers in IT was shown in the planetarium. Associate Director for Business Innovation Carolyn Zerkle mobilized a team of people from across the Laboratory to present the film and other activities at the event.

"By bringing together Laboratory IT professionals and community groups that serve as mentors to young people, this event launches relationships that will remain long after the event," Zerkle says.

Jocelyn Lujan from Pojoaque Valley Middle School programs a photo booth app with coding mentor Maria Fontenot from the Lab's Network Infrastructure and Engineering Division.

Aspen Elementary student Ginnie Pickett was hanging out by another station at the event facilitated by the CoderDojo for Teens local chapter. "You have to code to certain standards to get different belts in the belt system," she explains. Her dad, Neale Pickett with the Lab's Advanced Research in Cyber Systems, was also at the event as a mentor with CoderDojo and Los Alamos MakerSpace.

Enlarging the pool of qualified applicants for technology fields is part of the goal of Everyone Does IT. In December 2016, Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico were designated a TechHire Community by the White House, joining the national network of 71 communities aiming to connect 100,000 people to tech jobs by 2020.

"We'd definitely like to see another event like this one," says Jennifer Nevarez, founder of the New Mexico TechWorks taskforce who attended the event as part of the TechHire mission.

The Everyone Does IT planning team aspires to bring similar events to additional counties in Northern New Mexico to bring awareness of the wealth of tech opportunities available in the state. Watch the Everyone Does IT website for future events and for a resource listing of various educational programs available for students to pursue IT at the Laboratory and in the community.

Mountain Elementary student Sasha Carr and Bradbury Science Museum Scientist Ambassador Teri Roberts discuss how computers work at the Everyone Does IT event.