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Riveting experience:

Camp encourages girls to try new trades

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BENNINGTON — Rosie the Riveter, the symbol of women entering the building trades during World War II, changed the way women thought about themselves.

"Rosie's Girls," a three-week summer camp for girls entering grades 6 through 8, aims to do the same thing for the younger set. The program introduces girls to the trades, encouraging them to try things they've never done before.

The 10-year-old program originated in northern Vermont, offers camps in several states, and is in Bennington this year for the first time.

While the curriculum for the camp is not yet set in stone, carpentry instructor Jen Krijnen said, "There will definitely be a ropes course, a few different field trips — riding a farm tractor. There will be building projects, making a tool box, a CD shelf or something to that effect," Krijnen said. "They'll hammer and nail a lot. ... A solar panel will be a combination of building and energy, and we're looking into a weatherization project. I think sometimes kids understand better the crisis we're in, the oil shortage. It seems like they have more urgency about it."

Among the possible activities are swimming, walking, constructing a community service projects, silkscreening T-shirts, learning fuel economy, welding and exploring alternative energy, and how to apply math and science to real-world situations. They'll climb rock walls, canoe the Batten Kill, and have a "field day" with local

firefighters. They'll discuss the roles of women in politics, and visit local farms and arts and trades shops.

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In addition to carpentry, Krijnen will do yoga with the

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campers, and lead art projects. One possible project will be the construction of an earthen woodfired oven.

Each Friday will include a field trip. The last Friday will include a big barbecue for the campers and their families.

"We're trying to work with people outside" the camp, too, Krijnen said. She said camp organizers have consulted with potter Nancy Nardone about the Empty Bowls project, and are working on connecting Empty Bowls to the community garden, perhaps for a harvest soup. Campers will have a chance, when visiting the garden, to learn to identify pests — and engage in the simpler act of merely seeing how foods grow, a process from which many are disconnected.

"There's a strong push behind this for empowering girls," Krijnen said. She said a lot of the women behind the Rosie's Girls program lived through the feminist movement, and at times felt helpless because they were women. "That's a big focus, helping girls assert themselves, learn to empower themselves."

The camp will be held at the Southwest Vermont Career Development Center in Bennington, five days a week, from July 20-Aug. 7. Scholarships and financial aid are available to offset the \$450 tuition. The program has work boots to lend to any girls who do not have them, and they do not need to bring tools, as they will receive basic tools to keep, during the course of the camp.

Camper applications are available now at svsu.org or at the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union central office. Deadline for enrollment is Monday, July 13.

Business owners interested in donating tools for the program can contact Cheryl Young at 1-802-867-5921.

Particularly desired are hammers, speed squares, carpenter's pencils, tape measures, and child-sized safety glasses.

Rosie's Girls' is a program of Vermont Works for Women, whose mission is to help women and girls explore, pursue and excel in nontraditional careers that pay a livable wage.

The Bennington County Rosie's Girls Summer Program is sponsored by the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, the United Way of Bennington County, The 21st Century Grant which is matched locally by the Bank of Bennington, the Vermont Women's Fund, and private foundations, corporate, and individual sponsors.

Discover more at the Rosie's Girls Website at www.rosiesgirls.org.

Contact Stephanie L. Ryan at sryan@benningtonbanner.com.

