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Camp inspiring the next generation of engineers



At EnQuest, high school rising sophomore Kayla Baker, left, and rising senior Nansy Vue watch a tensile testing machine operate while recording data from their mice bones and polymers at UWM's Engineering and Mathematical Sciences building on July 29. PHOTOS BY DONNISA EDMONDS/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

At UWM, high school girls get a hands-on experience

Donnisa Edmonds
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Priyatha Premnath is handing out mouse bones to high school students. Excited chatter fills the lab as students pull on bright blue gloves and hold out one hand.

The students and Premnath, associate professor of biomedical engineering at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, have taken over a space on the ninth floor of UWM's Engineering and Mathematical Sciences building.

30 minutes after bone distribution, groups of students debate whether the bones will break under tension as they place them in a tensile testing machine.

This type of hands-on experience is typical of EnQuest, a weeklong engineering camp held every summer at UWM. It's primarily aimed at inspiring high school girls to pursue STEM careers, although it's open to all.

EnQuest has two camps – a day camp for eighth through 11th graders and an overnight camp for ninth through 12th graders. Both prioritize exposing campers to a variety of engineering skills and projects, and connecting them to working professionals.

Chris Beimborn, manager of STEM outreach at UWM's College of Engineering and Applied Science, has coordinated both camps for 15 years. Ap-



Associate professor Priyatha Premnath shows two campers how to take measurements of their mouse bone and polymers at a lab at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

plications for next summer's camps likely will open in March.

The idea came from a former doctoral student, Marissa Jablonksi, who was working with mechanical engineering professor John Reisel on a federal grant initiative to increase student recruitment and retention. Jablonksi reached out to Beimborn, who was working with local schools on outside enrichment activities to broaden student understanding of STEM. The two ended up developing the program together.

"My primary goal is to impact their perception of engineering and their motivation to give it a chance," said Beimborn. "A lot of students and a lot of people in our whole society have a very narrow – and not so accurate –

view of the work of engineers."

She wants high school girls to understand that engineering is about applying imagination and creativity to real world problems.

EnQuest prioritizes project-based learning.

Throughout each camp, students work on a group project centered on one engineering field with a tangible purpose that high school kids see as valuable.

The day camp always works on a project for an off-grid community in Guatemala that's in partnership UWM's student chapter of Engineers Without Borders. This year they helped customize a solar power station.

The overnight camp project usually has a biomedical engineering focus, led this year by Premnath and Masah Dahbagh, also an associate professor of biomedical engineering at UWM. The two professors are office neighbors and collaborators. The campers' project this year focuses on bone healing, and draws from their joint research projects combining Premnath's bone expertise with Dahbagh's computational modeling skills.

Dahbagh, who has worked with EnQuest since 2022, noted that women's participation in STEM careers is still not high. She hopes this

See CAMP, Page 2A

Fond du Lac County school year begins

Daphne Lemke
Fond du Lac Reporter
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Fond du Lac families are facing a whirlwind of back-to-school shopping and first-day-of-school jitters.

This year, local students will start classes before Labor Day, either in late August or on Sept. 1.

Here are the first days of school for Fond du Lac County.

Fond du Lac School District

The Fond du Lac School District starts school Sept. 1 for elementary, middle and high school students. 4-year-old kindergarten and early childhood students start Sept. 2.

North Fond du Lac School District

North Fond du Lac School District classes start Aug. 26.

See SCHOOL, Page 2A

Tornado count climbs in Wisconsin

Caden Perry
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

With more than two weeks left in August, Wisconsin has already had its second-highest number of tornadoes on record in a single year.

Wisconsin has had 46 tornadoes so far in 2026, matching the state's total for all of 2010. The only year since 1950 with more was 2005, when the state recorded 62 tornadoes, according to the National Weather Service. Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually, but this year, the state had at least that many during one week in April.

Most recently, an EF-3 tornado hit the Fox Cities on July 27, destroying homes and businesses while knocking down scores of trees and powerlines. It stayed on the ground for 26 minutes, cutting a 12.1-mile path through the Fox Cities, with winds between 136 and 155 mph.

The July 27 tornado was also the

See TORNADOES, Page 2A

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