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ELIZABETH CONLEY

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Personal: Elizabeth Conley is a 16-year-old sophomore at Technology High School. She lives in Rohnert Park with her dad, Gray, mom, Kim, brother, Ryan, 12, and sister, Jessica, who is 9.

Focusing on college: Liz Conley started thinking about college back in seventh grade. That's when she started talking to an older friend about her experiences attending Technology High School classes on the Sonoma State University campus. The special high school concentrates on a math and science track and offers its students many **tech**-related classes, including **robotics**.

“When I was a sophomore I shadowed her at school and I really liked what I saw,” said Conley, who is now one of about 240 students there.

Expanding girls' horizons: It was back in seventh grade that Conley attended a special conference for middle school girls called Expanding Your Horizons. She returned to speak at the conference last year and this year she will be part of the program introducing younger girls to the joys of intense math and science studies. This year's conference is March 24 at Santa Rosa Junior College.

“When I went in seventh grade, I took a statistics course and a computer game design course. It was really fun to get hands-on experience,” she said.

It all adds up: Math has always been one of her favorite subjects. Recently she has come around to appreciating her science courses as well.

“At **Tech High** the teachers are just so great, they just make everything more interesting,” she said. She is currently earning A's and B's in school and is focused on attaining scholarships for college. She'd like to attend a UC or an equivalent type of college in a nearby state.

“The main way I'll go to college is on scholarship so grades are really important. I've been talking to my school counselor about it. I'm pretty motivated,” said the teen, who also works 15 hours a week in retail to help pay her family's household expenses.

“I started working in December and it's teaching me how to record my spending, so I'll never be overdrawn,” she said.

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TECH HIGH ROBOTICS

Family funnies: She looks to her parents for advice and guidance, yet admits that they have some funny running jokes. She helps out with the dishes and laundry at home, but not the cooking.

“My dad jokes that I can burn Kool-Aide,” said the teen. Her dad also regularly cautions her that if she gets picked up by the police, he won’t bail her out.

“That’s a running joke with us,” she said.

Summer means helping others: Last summer, Conley volunteered as a teacher's aide at her school and she plans to devote this summer to the work as well.

“It’s pretty fun. I like helping other students. The boring part is making Xerox copies of stuff,” she said.

Scientific team spirit: She is a member of her school's **Robotics** Team, which requires lots of extra effort. They compete in a gathering called FIRST, which draws teams from all over the world that build robots and challenge each other.

“It starts with a clue about the competition. Then they send us a box of equipment to build our robot. But we can raise money to buy extra equipment, too,” she explained.

Local sponsors are petitioned by the team and Conley has been in on those sales pitches recently.

“We did a presentation and when the man said he'd support us, we all started screaming and jumping up and down. I think we scared him,” she said.

The competition launches locally in San Jose on March 15. If they make it through that round, the next phase will be on March 29 at UC Davis.

“It’s international too. What we are doing is the regional competition. It’s mainly **high** school teams with adult mentors,” she said.

Just for fun: Like most **high**-schoolers her favorite pastime is hanging out with friends. She listens to classic rock and heavy metal music -- it’s what she grew up hearing.

Although she's had her learner's permit for a while, she's nervous about actually taking her driver's license test.

“I’m fine driving with my family or people I know, but I get nervous with strangers,” she said.