

# Proud to Live in One of America's Best Communities: A Tualatin Teen's Perspective on the New Mobile Makerspace

*An Interview with Elaine Meslow, Tualatin High School, Committee Member for the America's Best Communities Marketing Team:*

## How did you get involved in the ABC project?

I was first introduced to the America's Best Communities Project during a Tualatin Library discussion asking students what STEAM materials they would want to see in The Tualatin Mobile Makerspace. I absolutely loved the concept; so much so that when I discovered that they were interested in having a high school student to assist on ABC Committee Meetings that I quickly voiced my interest and joined the project.

## Why do you think it is important for teens to get involved with this project, and how will it impact Tualatin teens in the future?

Not only is it a great opportunity for teens to make a visible change in their community for generations to come, but also it serves as a way for them to explore what the STEAM field has to offer and maybe just find something they really enjoy. By working as volunteers they can help younger children discover something they're passionate about, and then those kids have the ability to continue to pursue their newfound interests in High School and beyond.

Elaine Meslow

## How is the mobile makerspace going to change how kids learn about STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math)?

The Tualatin Makerspace opens up the door to any

student that could have an interest in working in the STEAM field and allows younger children hands on experiences before High School. It provides the opportunity for the students to really see all their ideas come to life and discover for themselves whether it's something they're really passionate about and would never have tried otherwise.

## How does hands-on learning make a difference for kids in education?

Giving kids the ability to see how the things they are learning in school can be applied to the real world is the most effective way to spark interest and curiosity in education. This is especially true in the STEAM fields, such as Engineering or Technology, as the ability to see the concepts you have learned come to life in unique and exciting ways leaves a lasting memory and continues to make students excited to learn.

## How do teens currently get exposed to different career pathways, and how is the ABC project working to expand these opportunities?

At Tualatin High School we have a variety of elective subjects for students to enjoy or to pursue as careers, however once all available classes have been taken there are not many paths in which to move forward with your education, especially if time and money are in short supply. In other schools around Tualatin these opportunities



could be even less prominent. With the ABC project creating this Tualatin Mobile Makerspace, not only can it offer materials to help students continue in fields they are passionate about, but it can also help to guide these students with internship and even job opportunities.

## Why are the "Arts" important when talking about STEAM?

The Mobile Makerspace at its core is the encouragement and growth of innovation and creation. This creative ability is definitely found in STEM fields, but when all these have the arts work alongside them they can truly flourish. Whether it's the designing of a rainwater collection system to look like an umbrella or the art that goes

into making a website user friendly, the arts and STEM go hand in hand and ultimately create the STEAM that the Tualatin Makerspace stands by.

## How can teens get involved with this project?

There are lots of way to get involved, including: volunteering with Tualatin Makerspace instructors to help set-up/run STEAM related activities at elementary schools; volunteering at other Tualatin Makerspace events to help run activities; joining the mailing list for when volunteering opportunities arise; and helping to promote the Tualatin Makerspace at events or online.

## Is there anything else you would like to share with youth in the community about this project?

We ACTUALLY live in a city that is currently in the Top Eight for the America's Best Communities Award. The whole concept is pretty mind blowing (surprising even, I suspect). It's incredible to think that we actually live in a place that could be worthy of that title, and that everyone who works, volunteers, or lives in the city is contributing to it. I'm really proud of that and others should be as well!

