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Future of Flight kids' program may extend to summer

By Andy Rathbun, Herald Writer

MUKILTEO — The Future of Flight Foundation may expand one of its popular middle school programs this summer thanks to a grant from NASA.

Program educator Amanda Goertz is developing an eight-week course using the \$50,000 grant so the foundation can offer its Flights of Innovation program year-round.

The expanded program will reach students during a significant period of time in their lives.

Many educators now believe that the middle school years are vital to the development of a student's long-term career plans.

"Being able to pique their interest and get that spark as early on as possible, so they can envision themselves in those jobs, is important," Goertz said.

Flights of Innovation challenges students with theoretical problems connected to the aerospace industry.

For instance, students might work as a team to address flooding at an airport. They could be asked to research geography and other environmental factors, developing a presentation that addresses the issue.

Right now, students only can take Flights of Innovation during the school year. Goertz, a former middle school teacher, works with classes in Everett, Marysville, Edmonds and Mukilteo.

The expanded program will act more like a summer camp, exposing more students to the aerospace industry.

Learning about career options in middle school can help students get into a particular field. They may recognize what sort of math and science courses are necessary to succeed and redirect their high school and college plans.

That early insight can help ensure students get the skills they need for their dream career.

"Luckily, education is offering more and more options," Goertz said.

The Future of Flight Aviation Center & Boeing Tour is open from 8:30am – 5:30pm daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Tours of the Boeing Assembly Plant operate daily at 9, 10, 11am and 1, 2 and 3pm.

Future of Flight Aviation Center & Boeing Tour, 8415 Paine Field Blvd., Mukilteo, WA 98275, 425-438-8100, www.futureofflight.org