

Commentary: Camp BizSmart is just right for young entrepreneurs

By Mary Ann Cook

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TWEENPRENEURS: If you know any budding entrepreneurs, ages 11-15, Camp BizSmart seems tailor-made for such a youngster. BizSmart's staff includes CEOs of such tech biggies as Cisco, Apple and Google, as well as execs from other innovative companies such as Garage Technology, Kaboodle and Wagic. Los Gatans Peggy and Mike Gibbs are the founders of Camp BizSmart.

Both are educators, as well as tech gurus. This year, its fourth, they expect 300 students for the two-week program held at one of seven sites. Local sites are Stanford and Santa Clara U, which draw students from 40 schools in the Bay Area, as well as abroad. Camp BizSmart will also sponsor camps in Honolulu and four cities in India this year.

At this camp, participants work in teams to solve real problems provided by Silicon Valley firms. Wagic execs work with them as they brainstorm--to solve a problem or promote a product they think has marketability. The teams learn to create a business plan, which are then presented to a panel in a competition held at Microsoft.

Last year HopeLab asked the kids to help design a teen fitness tracker called the Zamzee. So impressed was the company that some youngsters were assigned to be testers before the product was launched. Student-staff ratio at BizSmart is 7-1, and tuition is \$1,300.

Dr. Michael Gibbs has taught at UC-Berkeley's international MBA program. Earlier he worked for Texas Instruments and General Electric. Peggy Gibbs has worked for nonprofits in education, arts, health and technology, most recently as a VP at Benetech. Camp BizSmart is at www.campbizsmart.org.