



## AAUW Laguna Beach Wows Irvine Rotary Club by Lesley Danziger

It is fair to say that the Irvine Rotary Club was extremely impressed with the presentation by AAUW Laguna Beach Co-President Lesley Danziger and Tech Trek Coordinator Esther Hessong at their February 24<sup>th</sup> Breakfast Zoom meeting.

Lesley gave a brief overview of AAUW Laguna Beach, its mission and its many service-based projects. Club members were obviously impressed that we serve such a wide range of students, not only in age, but in geographic area. At this point, we recruit Tech Trek students from Venado Middle School in Irvine as well as Thurston in Laguna Beach. We offer high school scholarships to girls attending Estancia High School in the Newport-Mesa school district, Dana Hills High School and Laguna Beach High School. Our college scholarships reach out from Laguna College of Art and Design to Saddleback and Orange Coast Community Colleges and UCI. Like us, Rotary Club is also supporting students to prepare for the work force, so they were very interested in our long-term commitment to Start Smart salary negotiation workshops and now the free online Work Smart program offered by AAUW.

But most impressive to the Rotary Club was the presentation that Esther gave on Tech Trek. Esther described the influence of Tech Trek on her journey from being a seventh grade Tech Trekker to becoming a Ph.D. student at UCI in Materials Science and Engineering. She has continued to give back to Tech Trek by serving as a camp counselor and now our Laguna Beach Tech Trek Chair. Esther did not waste the opportunity to encourage Rotary Club members to support this summer's virtual Tech Trek camp as coaches to participants.



*Esther Hessong (bottom left) with fellow counselors at Tech Trek camp, Stanford University, 2012*

I learned two things from this presentation. First, we are very fortunate to have Esther in our branch and on our Board. Second, we need to get out more and share the phenomenal work we do with service organizations not just in Laguna Beach but also in the cities and school districts where many of our members reside. These other organizations share so much of the same commitment as we do to supporting young people – and they definitely don't bite, at least on zoom.