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PASCO, Wash. - Two Girl Scout cadets from Carmichael Middle School organized an all-girls chess tournament Saturday.

The Battle of the Queens Chess tournament is the first-of-its-kind in the Tri-Cities area took place at the Mid-Columbia Library in West Pasco.

Twelve year-old Beatrice Raugei and thirteen year-old Erin Hallquist kicked off the 2017-2018 tournament chess season with a visionary Silver Award project in mind and a progressive start to their eighth grade year.

The Silver award is one of the highest awards a Girl Scout cadette can earn.

The Silver Award project gives them a chance to do big things while making their community a better place.

The tournament was open to girls from K through 12th grade.

Raugei and Hallquist wanted to encourage more girls to participate in chess.

“I only saw five girls at the last chess tournament I went to that had 200 people playing. I began thinking of ways where I could get more girls to play chess. So that’s how I came up with an only girls chess tournament,” girl scout Beatrice Raugei said.

Raugei teamed up with her girl scout friend Erin Hallquist to transform the idea into a reality.

“Watching our idea come off the drawing board is amazing. We wanted girls to become more confident while they’re playing because chess is a more male dominated sport and so we want to encourage more girls to do it,” girl scout Erin Hallquist said.

The two believed that holding The Battle of the Queens Chess Tournament would help female chess players develop a sense of sisterhood, especially in the middle and high school years.

“I think more girls would continue to play chess if they recognize the friendly faces of other girl players when they go to tournaments,” said Raugei.

Last spring, Raugei and Hallquist approached the Washington Elementary Chess Champions Board President, David Merrill, about the possibility of holding such a tournament. From there it was full-steam ahead.

The girls highlighted several women chess players on the Tournament staff. Among those women were: WFM Chouchan Airapetian, who traveled with her daughter from the west side of the state to act as Head Judge. Airapetian, recently won the 2017 Washington Women's Championship which was held in Seattle on September 15-17, 2017.

The Pasco School District has a very strong chess program with quite a few female players. When Raugei and Hallquist analyzed past tournament data, they recognized that by holding the tournament in Pasco, it significantly increased the participation of the Pasco girls.

“We are bringing the tournament to the players,” said Hallquist.

Over 60 chess players showed up to play Saturday.

The state chess tournament will be held at the TRAC in Pasco on April 21, 2018.

Pasco School District has sent the largest contingent to the tournament of any school district in the state. Adding the participants from Kennewick, Richland, and the surrounding towns, they will make up almost one-quarter of the 800+ chess players expected to attend the state tournament this year.

Over 2,000 people in total are expected to converge on the Tri-Cities for the high-profile event.

Both Raugei and Hallquist hope to host another tournament in the future.

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