

The Opinion Page

AAUW Supports Helping Women Enter Tech Fields

POTSDAM - The American Association of University Women (AAUW) applauds the latest move by the federal government to make it easier for women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

AAUW has a special interest in this issue, as we are preparing to take our successful regional STEM programming nationwide to encourage women and girls to enter these careers.

In recognition of AAUW's contributions to research and grassroots advocacy in promoting women's increased participation in STEM, the White House invited AAUW Executive Director Linda D. Hallman, CAE, and AAUW President Carolyn Garfein to attend Monday's announcement of the National Science Foundation's 10-year plan to increase workplace flexibility in the STEM fields. The event, in the East Room of the White House, featured First Lady Michelle Obama and NSF Director Subra Suresh.

"We welcome the administration's recognition of the vital role the federal government plays in removing occupational barriers to women in these fields. AAUW's work in this area shows that even small improvements can make a big difference in retaining the best minds in the science and math fields," Hallman said.

AAUW's 2010 research report, *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*, provides compelling evidence of the environmental and social barriers that continue to limit women's participation and progress in those fields. This report sparked AAUW's renewed commitment to building successful local programs to attract girls and women to STEM fields.

Currently, AAUW branches run many STEM education programs throughout the country, encouraging thousands of girls to consider a future in STEM.

Next year, AAUW will partner with major corporations, government entities, and organizations currently participating in national STEM education coalitions to develop more STEM programs nationwide. These programs will be focused not only on students but also on the adults who can positively influence girls' career decisions. Additionally, in 2012 AAUW will release new research on the role of com-

munity colleges in educating students for STEM careers.

AAUW has a rich history of supporting women in STEM. In 1920, AAUW provided Marie Curie with funds to purchase radium for her research. AAUW also supported Jenny Bramley, who invented the cathode ray tube, the astronaut Judith Resnick, and many other prominent women in STEM. Gayle S. W. Hagler, a 2006-07 AAUW Selected Professions Fellow, received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.

Since 1888, AAUW has provided more than \$90 million in fellowships and grants to 11,000 recipients, and we currently give more than \$3.7 million each year to women preparing research for publication, advancing their careers, reentering the workforce, and pursuing advanced studies in the traditionally male STEM fields. AAUW also funds innovative community programs with a particular focus on increasing girls' and women's achievements in STEM.

Locally the St. Lawrence County Branch funds summer programs for local students to attend STEM enrichment activities through its Open Windows for Girls program. Since 1989, the branch has been offering camperships to girls to attend science-related camps. Two girls attended Camp Invention at SUNY Canton this summer, and others attended the Clarkson Horizons Program.

Membership in the St. Lawrence County Branch is open to anyone who supports the mission of AAUW. AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. AAUW's commitment to educational equity is reflected in its public policy advocacy, community programs, leadership development, conventions and conferences, national partnerships, and international connections.

For more information about AAUW locally, contact President Becky Gerber at 268-9957 or gerberrl@potdam.edu or Public Policy Chair Kathleen Stein at 386-3812 or kstein1@twcny.rr.com.