

For immediate release

Exploring Pathways at Girls STEAM Ahead

Homewood Science Center's Girls STEAM Ahead 2020 conference will be held March 7 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Idlewild Country Club in Flossmoor. Girls STEAM Ahead connects female students in grades 7-12 from throughout the Chicago Southland and Northwest Indiana with women mentors who are studying and working in science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) fields.

This free annual event includes networking, inspirational talks, STEAM activities, and goal setting. Registration for student and professional attendees is now available on the Homewood Science Center website.

Showcasing STEAM

The program will open with a STEAM Showcase highlighting the work of women from diverse cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds, to introduce students to career paths and potential mentors. Cook County Commissioner Donna Miller will provide the keynote address on the theme of "Exploring Pathways." Following the keynote, a panel of women from the University of Chicago will share how their work and education have led to travel and exploration, and representatives from Lego Education and the Society of Women Engineers will present hands-on STEAM challenges that students and professionals will work together to solve. Schneider Electric employees will then guide participants through a goal-setting exercise.

"Companies are seeking to diversify teams, because they realize strength is in diversity. And young women are looking for opportunities. Girls STEAM Ahead brings these groups together," said Edie Dobrez, Homewood Science Center executive director.

Girls STEAM Ahead is an initiative of Homewood Science Center and the Chicago Southland STEM Network. Thanks to sponsorship from Schneider Electric, the event is free to all participants. Bank of America is underwriting costs for the online program directory, which students can use to keep abreast of job shadowing, internship, volunteer, and scholarship opportunities throughout the year; Enbridge is providing a luncheon for attendees; Gallagher Asphalt is powering technology for the event; Levenfeld Pearlstein LLC is sponsoring the STEAM Showcase; and Flossmoor Service League is providing transportation for qualifying school districts. The PEO philanthropic

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organization, Homewood Business Association, and Homewood Florist are providing additional support, as are a number of individual donors.

A powerful force

According to reports from the Pew Research Center and the National Science and Technology Council, the underrepresentation of women in science and technical careers limits women's economic mobility, along with our nation's global competitiveness and growth from innovation.

Women make up 47 percent of the U.S. labor force, but hold only 26 percent of computer science and math jobs. The architecture and engineering sector is only 15 percent female. In recent years, Black and African American women have earned just one percent of bachelor's degrees in science and engineering and Hispanic women and Latinas have earned two percent.

Girls STEAM Ahead gives female students an opportunity to learn about education and career paths in STEAM and to reflect on their plans for the future with the support of an experienced generation of women leaders.

Women mentors have been shown to be a powerful force to help female students maintain confidence in their skills, feel a sense of belonging, and stay committed to personal and professional goals in STEAM.

Girls STEAM Ahead "let me know I wasn't alone," wrote one student who attended last year's event. "I have new careers I am now considering," wrote another.

Registration for Girls STEAM Ahead is open until March 1 for girls in grades 7-12 and women who are studying or working in STEAM fields. To register, learn more, or make a donation to support this free event, please visit www.homewoodsciencecenter.org/gsa.

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About Homewood Science Center: Homewood Science Center is a nonprofit regional science center that serves Chicago's culturally and economically diverse south suburbs. Our mission is to inspire scientific wonder, learning, and pursuit. We create opportunities for students to explore science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) by working with educators, STEM professionals, and partner organizations to deliver programs to increase STEM literacy and diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM.

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