

SIUE alumna leads by example, promotes interest in structural engineering

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville alumna Stephanie Spann's passion for building and creating began at a young age. As she matured, she continued to develop a love for buildings, architecture and structures — a feeling she has never outgrown.

Her pursuit of an engineering degree was solidified when a friend asked whether she was more interested in the skeleton or the skin of a building. Spann said skeleton, to which the friend replied, “Now that sounds like an engineer!”

Spann went on to earn both a bachelor's and master's of civil engineering from SIUE in 2001 and 2002, respectively. She is now a structural engineer, project manager and building information modeler at **David Mason and Associates in St. Louis**.

“Engineers are the creators and developers of so much that goes unseen and overused,” Spann said. “Things like decaying infrastructure that we just can’t do without or the need to physically support a building whose architecture is pushed to new limits. There are so many reasons why we need engineers of all types.”

Spann emphasizes the excellent academic education she received at SIUE. Moreover, she asserts the **School of Engineering’s** collaboration with industry professionals played an integral role in preparing her for a career in engineering and provided crucial networking opportunities.

Through her membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) St. Louis Chapter, Spann is a mentor to aspiring engineers. She is the local contest coordinator for the **Engineering Encounters Bridge Design Contest (EEBDC)**.

“This is an internet-based bridge design competition that is open to middle and high school students,” she explained. “It’s a great introduction to engineering and infrastructure economics using a healthy competitive system. Participation is free, and anyone can download the software and play with it!”

Along with promoting interest in civil engineering, Spann hopes the public will gain an appreciation for the work involved in the structures that are used every day, which is often taken for granted.

“While we have so many great inventions out there today, the world is ever evolving, and the only way to incorporate these changes is to adapt and improve upon that which we already have,” Spann said. “I see this job landing in the laps of the great problem solvers who are engineers.”

The annual EEBDC completion date is March 25. Prizes for local contest winners will be awarded at the ASCE Luncheon on Tuesday, April 12 at the Engineer’s Club of St. Louis. There is also a concurrent national contest.

To [register](#) and [download](#) the bridge design software, visit bridgecontest.org. Contact Stephanie Spann at sspann@davidmason.com with questions.