



# GEMS Expands Girls' Career Horizons

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The 18th annual GEMS (Girls Empowered by Math and Science) Conference for area middle school girls is focused on providing young females an opportunity to learn about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers. Participants are more likely to pursue and enjoy STEM courses in high school and college as a result of their GEMS experience. The girls enjoy exploring and discovering their interests and excitement about careers like archeology, dentistry, physical therapy, architecture, nursing, pharmacy, computer science and engineering to name a few. Girls are able to choose from 16 different experiential, hands-on workshops presented by successful professional women in these careers. The workshop presenters are passionate about their careers and are an inspiration to the middle school girls.

The conference was initiated 18 years ago after a study funded by the AAUW Education Foundation, "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America," revealed that girls in elementary school show aptitude in math and science, but tend to fall behind in these areas during middle school. Linda Chapman, Dean of Academic Affairs at LCCC said, "At the point that middle school girls begin to drift away from math and science and begin thinking that they aren't good at it, they are closing themselves off from 85 percent of the career opportunities in this country."

The GEMS conference will be held at the McPike Complex, Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey on Saturday, April 6th, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Girls in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades from Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin and Madison County and East St. Louis schools are invited to attend and experience a fun day that will expand their horizons and change the way they think about math, science and technology.

A sample of a few of the interactive workshops will include: becoming a dot.com diva where the girls learn about jobs with Google, IBM, and Microsoft and compose animated stories in a virtual world; creating architectural diagrams and plans animated through the use of 3D software; digging into archeology by shaping a piece of flint into a useable archaeological tool; exploring a pond to discover how macroinvertebrate

critters help scientists determine water quality; and, applying the principles of chiropractic acupuncture for health.

A popular and eye opening session for all the girls is “Welcome to the Real World” sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension. The girls fast forward to age 24, choosing a career with a given salary and budget rent, utilities, car, taxes, entertainment and other expenses based on their life choices. The program gives girls a glimpse of the real world of career choices, decision-making and money management.

The 2013 GEMS Conference has special sessions for adults. These sessions are designed to help parents, teachers and other interested care givers prepare to meet the challenges facing today’s young girls as they progress in their schooling. Each session offers participants insightful, relevant approaches to support and prepare young girls to feel confident about engaging in science, technology, engineering and math studies while in school. Teachers attending the conference will receive five CPDUs.

The GEMS conference is sponsored by the Wood River, Alton and Jerseyville/Calhoun branches of the American Association of University Women, the Madison County Graduate Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., and Lewis and Clark Community College.

For more information and convenient online registration, visit: [www.gemsconference.com](http://www.gemsconference.com) or call (618) 786-2943. Each of the 16 GEMS workshops is limited to 15 students and always fills up quickly. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. The cost is \$15 per participant (includes snack and conference T-shirt). Registration closes March 30th.