

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois Hosts Women in STEAM Roundtable with White House Office of Public Engagement and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

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On March 7, 2013, Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois hosted a White House Roundtable on Women in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics) at its Regional Service Center in Mt. Vernon. The Women in STEAM meeting was part of the White House Roundtable series “Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics.”

Dr. Ann Bartuska, Deputy Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, met with Girl Scouts and other community

members to talk about STEAM and workplace development. As part of the USDA's celebration of Women's History Month, Dr. Bartuska is traveling and meeting with various groups to see firsthand successful STEAM programs, to share ideas and to encourage STEAM workplace development.

Also attending the STEAM Roundtable were:

-Dr. Sharon Locke, Director, STEM Outreach Center SIUE

-Dr. Gretchen Dabbs, Assistant Professor and Co-Director, Complex for Forensic Anthropology Research SIUC



- Sarah Varner, Educational Program Director, Southern Illinois Science Center
- Angela Smith, Interpretive Services and Outreach Program, National Great Rivers Museum St. Louis District Army Corps of Engineers
- Elisabeth Knierim, National Science Teachers Association SIUE President
- Kindra Smith, Challenge and Change awardee, working on her Gold Award
- Dixie Travelstead, GSSI Board
- Diane Michalczuk, U.S. FIRST Robotics Operational FLL Partner for Illinois
- Villie M Appoo, GSSI CEO
- Susan Gurwitch, GSSI COO
- Emily Stanley and Mary Buchanan from GSSI STEM Program

“We were thrilled to host the White House Roundtable on Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Math,” said Emily Stanley, GSSI STEM Program Manager. “Girl Scouts offers many STEM programs for girls and has a long history of encouraging girls to participate in STEM careers,” Stanley said. “Our goal is to build and reinforce girls’ interest in STEM, to support their continued involvement as they reach critical decision-making points and to achieve gender parity in these fields.”

Girl Scouts is closing the STEM Gap through a variety of STEM initiatives:

- Developing outreach programs that target underserved, low income and rural populations in schools and detention centers with STEM opportunities.
- Offering a wide array of programs – like simple circuit wiring, programming robots, exploring forensics and riding Segways to fulfill the STEM interests of all girls.
- Increasing the number of GSSI robotics First Legos League (FLL) teams from one in 2009 to 11 in 2013. These teams have experienced major accomplishments including: earning awards like Rookie Award, Robot Table Performance Award and qualifying for Regional Competitions.

-GSSI created the first all-Girl Scout Botball team nationwide. In their first tournament, the team was the only all-girl team competing and placed 3rd overall. Now GSSI has 3 Girl Scout Botball teams.

-GSSI hosted the first JrFLL Lego Expo where more than 90 6-9 year olds from around Illinois and Missouri participated by designing a simple Legos machine and research project.

The Girl Scout Mission is: ***Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.*** Today's Girl Scouts not only enjoy camping and crafts, but they also explore math and science and learn about diversity, good citizenship, leadership and teamwork. Girl Scouting is the place where girls experience the fun, friendship and power of girls working together.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois serves 14,000 girls and 4,800 adult volunteers in more than 40 counties in southern Illinois. Girl Scouting has inspired more than 50 million girls and women since its founding in 1912. Girl Scouting is focused on providing a premier Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls in the 21st century, while ensuring the traditions and values that have been core to Girl Scouting since its beginning remain strong and relevant.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is a not-for-profit organization supported by various United Ways throughout the region. Girl Scouts is a Proud Partner of United Way.

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