



# **2015 GEMS Conference Aims to Empower Girls through Math and Science**

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**GODFREY** – The Piasa Area Council of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) will present the 2015 GEMS (Girls Empowered by Math and Science) Conference for girls in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 21, in the McPike Math and Science Complex at Lewis and Clark Community College.

“Girls who attend the GEMS conference will get the opportunity to experience math and science during hands-on sessions,” said L&C Math Professor Kathy Kopelousos. “The conference is fun with lots of energy and door prizes.”

Girls from schools and districts in Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin and Madison counties, and East St. Louis, are encouraged to experience how important science, math and technology classes are to future career options. Teachers, parents and guardians of these girls are also invited to attend special sessions designed for them.

Guests will experience hands-on math, science and technology workshops presented by successful career women from the community. The workshops will cover a variety of topics ranging from exploration of wildlife habitats to creation of three-dimensional animations.

“Every girl attends two sessions of her choice and one mandatory session, The Real World session, which is named appropriately,” Kopelousos said. “It is a simulation of the real world. The girls will make adult decisions and ‘live’ through the consequences.”

The GEMS program was initiated after an AAUW Educational Foundation funded study, “Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America,” revealed that girls in elementary school show aptitude and interest in math and science, but tend to fall behind in these areas in middle school. AAUW wants girls to continue to both value and excel in mathematics, science and technology.

“At that point when 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,” said Vice President of Academic Affairs Linda Chapman.

The GEMS Conference is sponsored by L&C, AAUW, Piasa Area Council: Alton, Jersey and Calhoun Counties, Wood River Branches, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Edwardsville Chapter.

The \$15 registration fee includes snacks and a conference T-shirt. Fee waivers are available. For more information or to register, visit [www.gemsconference.com](http://www.gemsconference.com).