

STEM in Focus at The White House Summit on The United State of Women

On June 14-15, 2016, the Honorable Megan J. Smith, U.S. Chief Technology Officer, led the way to elevate awareness about STEM careers and resources made available to communities across our nation. At the first ever Summit on The United State of Women, over 5000 mostly women convened to hear, share and be inspired by the very best the world has to offer in the form of leadership, advocates, educators, celebrities, technologist, business owners, among others. STEM was at the forefront of discussions for career choices for women and girls in our future. My name is Loretta Cheeks, Founder of Strong TIES, a provider of STEM K-12 educational programs and an AZ SciTech Festival partner. I was invited as a Change Maker Nominee to his outstanding event that celebrate women and girls.



Honorable Megan J. Smith, U.S. Chief Technology Officer, Loretta H. Cheeks, Strong TIES Founder, Quincy Brown, Ph.D., AAAS Science and Policy Fellow NSF (from right to left).

The day of the Summit, Megan hosted “Cracking the Code”, which was a breakout session that gave educators, government, industry and community leaders a platform for showcasing what they’re doing to increase more participation of women and girls. The Mathtastic 4 presented their Math Video Challenge project, which was an innovative storyline movie that demonstrated the constraints and rules when *tackling a permutation problem*. Giving the students a voice and the tools for expressing how they see problems and provide solutions aligns well with AZ SciTech Festival Chief Science Officers (CSO) program. What was especially awesome about this session is Megan gave a big shout out to Arizona CSO’s? Did you hear that, the work of the AZ SciTech Festival has hit the highest level of attention! And afterwards, we spoke and she expressed great excitement about CSO’s and its’ potential.



Mathtastic 4, MathCounts Video Challenge Project winners and Honorable Megan J. Smith

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hosted “Crafting the Bigger Picture: Empowering Women and Girls in STEM”, where a small group of STEM non-profits, education, industry, higher education institutions engaged in a working session. The cool thing about this session is our host and the leadership for DOE and EPA are women; Gina McCarty (Adminstrator EPA), Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall (Deputy



Michele Easter, NASA Engineer

Secretary DOE), and LaDoris “Dot” Harris (Director DOE). The purpose was to share experiences and resources among the group and bring awareness of STEM initiatives underway at DOE and EPA.

Our next stop was NASA Headquarters for the session called “Engaging Women and Girls in STEM through Data Science”. As an ASU Computer Science Ph.D. graduate student with a focus in data mining and machine learning, this

topic really intrigued me. What I found wasn’t the deep dive of algorithms and techniques, rather women who were not computer scientist taking the lead to innovate using NASA datasets for making their communities better and women who had taken non engineering careers had decided on engineering. For instance, Michele Easter began her career as a model and became a Mechatronics Engineer. She now works on the Europa Lander Project and is founder of the educational initiative, MindMakerProject.org. Say amazingly smart, strong and beautiful!

My last stop was NASA Science Day on Capitol Hill. This was geek heaven where the coolest scientist converged to talk about explorations, space and earth. Did you know on July 4th, NASA spacecraft, Juno, will orbit Jupiter around 11:30PM (PST)? We may have fireworks in space as well as on earth. During the flybys, Juno will probe beneath the obscuring cloud cover of Jupiter and study its auroras to learn more about the planet's origins, structure, atmosphere and magnetosphere. Jupiter is believe to be the blueprint for all Solar System Planets. NASA scientist are on a quest to understand life that exist on Jupiter, which is an indication that water exist. Listen up on July 4th.



Let’s aspire and inspire others to engage in STEM.

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