

Dr. Cheeks A National 'GEM' In STEAM

Special to the Informant

Few Black women engineers have enjoyed as successful a career in multiple arenas as much as the woman Dr. Loretta H. Cheeks. She unapologetically accepts the challenge to stand out and stand loud in being first to many life goals and career pursuits.

A National Science and Technology Medals Foundation Expert Connect, an Onyx Pillar of Innovation, a United State of Women Changemaker are among the many honors presented to the National GEM Consortium Alumni award recipient who has been engaging in engineering, research and business for more than three decades.



Dr. Loretta H. Cheeks

Since starting her career journey in the chemical industry while at Southern University and A&M College, she has defied many odds

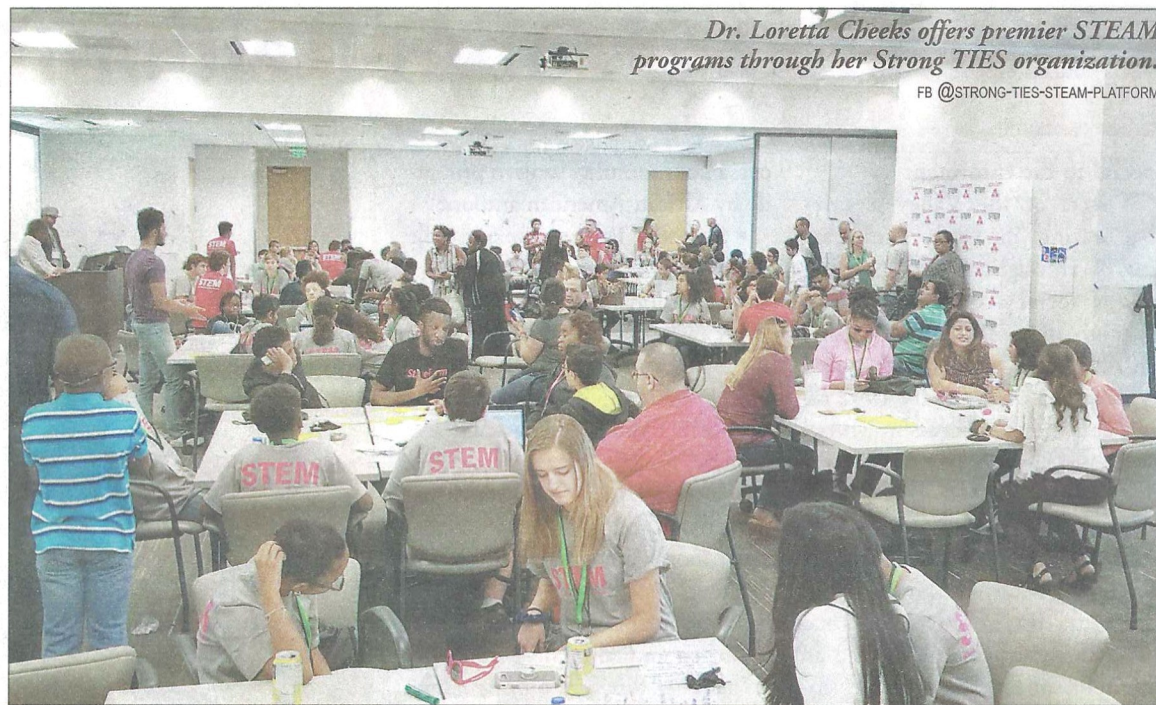
for what is possible for a lifelong career doing what she loves and being who she is. She wears her overcoming many odds success stories as a badge of honor considering the struggles her ancestors bared to make it possible for her to be here today.

Through struggle and grit in a more than 90 percent White male tech industry, Dr. Cheeks fulfilled a lifelong goal to earn a Ph.D. in computer science. This leap from industry into being a full-time student would come with many bends, twists and turns and shifting priorities. But the difference maker came when she became a National GEM Consortium GEM Fellow at Arizona State University.

The National GEM Consortium GEM Fellows is among very few programs in the U.S. designed to pay tuition and stipend for underrepresented groups (i.e., African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic Americans) who are often excluded from opportunities to advance.

When Dr. Cheeks was awarded the GEM Fellowship, this did two things. It made it easier for research advisors to accept her into their lab, because they were gaining a student at no cost and it relieved her financial barrier. It's been said, the GEM Fellowship come with no strings attached.

GEM's vision that began in response to the 1960s civil rights advocacy is a U.S. STEM workforce, where all are valued and empowered to realize their fullest potential through parity of access to senior



Dr. Loretta Cheeks offers premier STEAM programs through her Strong TIES organization.
FB @STRONG-TIES-STEAM-PLATFORM

levels, leading to scientific advancement that drives global innovation and maximizes social and economic impact. GEM prepare technical leaders for advanced careers in industry, academia, and government agencies by identifying and selecting highly qualified GEM Fellows to complete a program of graduate study and internships. Through their university, corporate members, and other strategic partners, GEM develops funding to award fellowships and builds mentor networks to support Fellows in achieving academic and professional success.

Dr. Cheeks will receive the Alumni Leadership Award at The National GEM Consortium's (GEM's) 46th Annual Conference and Gala, which recognizes and celebrates her role as an influential leader, with

a deep commitment and passion for public service, and dedication to creating better opportunities for members of underrepresented groups in STEM-related fields.

This year's gala will convene some of the most accomplished diverse senior executives from across the STEM arena in downtown Phoenix Thursday, Sept. 8, 2022. More importantly though, it will convene the next generation of leaders and Dr. Cheeks involvement will allow them to recognize the heights that they can achieve, after all you can't be what you can't see.

Dr. Loretta Cheeks, Ph.D., is a senior executive leader, an entrepreneur, a speaker, and a recognized expert in artificial intelligence, computing and technology. She

has three decades of leadership experience, developing and deploying large-scale systems and leading various teams within the ground and satellite communications, avionics, energy systems instrumentation and control and chemical industries for Fortune 500 corporations. Dr. Cheeks is founder and CEO of DS Innovation, a small business founded in 2018 and based in Arizona. Dr. Cheeks also is committed to improving science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) secondary and higher education for underserved and underrepresented groups to follow in her scientific footsteps. To do that, Dr. Cheeks founded "Strong TIES," a nonprofit established in 2014.

For more information about GEM Consortium, visit gemfellowship.org.