

Pipeline Newsletter: Vol. 01- Issue 5, Winter 2011

COORDINATOR'S BRIEF

Educational segregation leads to occupational segregation. Men predominantly occupy most of the jobs in science, construction and engineering, while women continue to occupy a majority of the arts, humanities and care-related fields (U.S. Department of Labor). With new green jobs dominating the national job development agenda it is important to put measures in place to encourage girls and women to enter nontraditional educational fields and professions.

Experts have predicted that a vast majority of "green jobs are expected to be in the construction, manufacturing, and engineering fields," (C. Stevens), all of which are occupations traditionally held by men. The future growth expected in this area presents a real opportunity for women to break into a higher wage employment sector that has not been shackled with a history of occupational segregation. We have to start preparing girls to understand the potential rewards associated with these occupations and one place to start is our CTE schools.



Victoria Caldwell building her own computer in CISC0 class Grade 12 Cisco Class, Ralph McKee CTE High School - Staten Island. Photo Courtesy of School .

CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Celebrating Women's History Month

When chemist Gertrude Elion (1918-1999) tried to get a job in the 1930s she was told "we've never had a woman in the laboratory before , and we think you will be a distracting influence." This did not deter her from pursuing a science career. She later won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1988.

March is Women's History Month (originally called International Working Women's Day), a time when many schools will highlight stories about amazing women who have made a difference. In addition to highlighting well known historic or contemporary figures, schools should also expose students to accessible women in nontraditional careers. There are many women who in their everyday lives are making a difference in your students' immediate community. These women have challenging nontraditional jobs and often face hurdles because of their gender. They are cracking the proverbial concrete and glass ceilings in the occupations our young women should be considering in the future. Invite these women to your schools during March because both boys and girls can benefit from listening to their stories of personal triumph. Although well known figures offer inspiration, the reality is that more girls respond to natural role models such as family, friends and neighbors to help shape their career paths. If girls do not know real, accessible women in nontraditional careers they usually cannot imagine themselves doing this type of work. Legal Momentum can help connect you with articulate and enthusiastic tradeswomen and other female professionals in non-traditional occupations for this purpose.

Also reach out to other organizations such as local technology colleges and universities, because they also offer role models who can encourage girls to enter technology and science fields. Many of these schools have departments devoted to advancing girls' access to technical careers. For example the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers at City Tech can help you find role models to visit your school. Similarly, the National Assn. of Women in Construction (NAWIC) has several chapters in NY with members who will work closely with your schools to find role models.

Students As Role Models: A Principal Speaks

Recently one of our seniors, Victoria Caldwell (pictured on the front), came to my office with her flash drive saying: "I was sent to you by the Gods. Take a look at how we are building our own computers in CISCO." When I viewed the drive it revealed an array of photos showing our girls and boys building their own computer towers. Seeing Victoria's excitement led me to ask her to explain what they were learning. The ever outspoken Victoria [who also happens to be the president/founder of the McKee Big Brother and Big Sister program] eagerly provided more information about the computer brain she had built.

It always excites me to see our students enjoy what they are learning. At McKee, we face the enormous hurdle of getting our girls interested in both the serious uses of technology, as well as recognizing the many purposes it serves in their everyday lives. Students usually appreciate the recreational (superficial) uses of the cell phone, computer and various other gadgets they try to sneak into the classroom. Educators today have the unique challenge of incorporating many modern technologies with education and career goals. Listening to Victoria explain what she knows proves that our effort to implement a gender equity plan is working. Although some of the girls still shy away from technology electives, we will continue to encourage them to try these subjects. One of our strategies is to have students like Victoria speak to our freshman classes before they choose their electives. This has been really helpful in getting the message across to our girls that they too can build a computer tower.

Regards, Sharon Henry - Principal, Ralph R. McKee

Female Role Models Make Lasting Impression.

Girls today need positive nontraditional female role models more than ever. Unfortunately, many of the cultural models they see in popular media affirm many gender stereotypes. These pop culture role models, such as reality show teen moms, spoilt heiresses, child star addicts, and teenage girls who would prefer to die because they have a crush on a vampire, are only a few of the cultural images that create or feed negative stereotypes that plague and undermine girls' self esteem.

Women's History Month is the perfect opportunity to introduce and incorporate positive female role models into activities celebrating the month. These inspirational role models should include women in nontraditional jobs because their careers are important and groundbreaking. Their stories can help girls avoid stereotype traps associated with studying technology or considering careers in those fields.

Schools can help bolster girls' self esteem and reverse the impact of negative role models by providing girls with positive images about working women. Saturating our girls' senses with images of successful women in technology, science and math can help to eliminate many outdated thinking that continue to persist about the kind of careers men and women should pursue. For example, Mrs. Ursula Burns, is not only the first African American woman to head a Fortune 500 Company, she is also the only female engineer to head one. It is important to introduce role models like Mrs. Burns to girls.

Cheryl Farrell is an electrician and shop steward with over 21 year years of experience in Local Union #3, (IBEW). Having completed her B.S. degree in Labor Studies she is currently pursuing her Masters in Construction Management at Columbia University. As a member of CTEA high school advisory board she works on developing electrical industry partnerships to support work-based learning. She is also the proud mother of a daughter who has followed in her footsteps as an electrician.

Cheryl Farrell (right) with fellow tradeswoman Norene Walker. New school fair for CTEA High School Queens, NY.



THE NEWSLETTER WILL BE ISSUED MONTHLY.

Next issue: April 2011. If you have a gender equity activity/event submit information to bwatson@legalmomentum.org. Deadline for the next issue: Monday, April 4, 2011.

Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum & the Motorola Found. - Camp **GOALS (Greater Opportunities Advancing Leadership and Science) for Girls** is an application-based **FREE** six-week summer **camp** for current 8th and 9th grade girls from NYC public schools. Contact Shay Saleem at 646-381-5168 or Camp-GOALS@intrepidmuseum.org. Applications available online - **Teachers' recommendation Deadline is March 25; Students' Application Deadline is April 4.**

The Pipeline Project is designed to create effective recruitment and retention strategies for girls exploring non-traditional career opportunities; provide technical assistance on compliance with the gender equity requirements of Title IX and the Carl Perkins Act; and develop systemic approaches to gender segregation in CTE schools and career training tracks.

Legal Momentum is dedicated to advancing rights and opportunities for women and girls. Founded in 1970 as the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, our work focuses on economic security/justice and freedom from gender-based violence. Legal Momentum has developed nationally-recognized expertise and precedent-setting cases focused on the employment rights of women, as well as programs that challenge discrimination and expand opportunities for women and girls in historically male-dominated fields such as the skilled trades.