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GEMS Program attracts Lane girls to field of science

By Claudia Maj

Step aside boys, the girls are coming through! That is, in math, science, and technology of course.

The GEMS program (Girls' Electronic Mentoring in Science, Engineering, and Math) was first introduced to Lane while assistant principal Dr. Dignam and science teacher Mr. Kopak were interviewing science teachers for the 2011-2012 school year. Throughout every interview they had asked the teacher whether or not they would sponsor and help with the club.



One of the interviewed teachers, Ms. Finchum, was a mentor/tutor for the club while she was a student at UIC. She and Dr. Dignam discussed the start of GEMS here at Lane.

Now the girls meet for GEMS the first Monday of every month to explore their interests in math, science and technology. The meetings take place in room 305 after school.

"We started this club to get girls excited to be in a field that is mostly male dominated," Dignam said.

The girls have gone on field trips together and they work on experiments to build interest in topics brought up in the club. They also receive news about possible internships and scholarships in the math and science fields.

A common event that takes place during the meetings is having a guest speaker visit.

Most visitors that come to the club have been women who have excelled in careers in math, science, and technology.

"I have heard about many women taking the lead in scientific jobs but I never had the chance to meet any," club member Anastasiya Sapatynska, Div. 467 said, "I want to be an anesthesiologist nurse so I was really excited to hear that one was going to visit us, and I loved how much she enjoyed her job."

Statistically it is shown that there are still less women working in the math and science field. According to an article published November 4, 2011 in the New York Times, women only make up 17 to 18 percent of those who have a bachelor's degree in engineering and computer science. Just over 40 percent of bachelor degrees in the physical sciences and math are earned by women.

"Young girls and women may have all the skills needed to be top-notch engineers or scientists, but if they fall victim to believing in stereotypes, they may not think they will be successful," Project coordinator Sarah Shirk at UIC said.

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"One thing I know is that I want an occupation in the field of science, and that is mainly why I am in GEMS, it helps me figure out what I like and dislike," Hardin said.

As president, Hardin helps the adult club sponsors. She also informs the other members about upcoming news and meetings and welcomes the guest speakers.

The Google office will be visiting Lane March 26. during ninth period, where they will be talking about careers in computer science.

The club currently has an open enrollment, which means any girl can still join the club by signing up to the club's contact list via the Lane Tech website.

The main goal of the club is to keep girls' hopes and spirits up so they will not give up in preparing their dream jobs. GEMS is raising 'Girl Power' to its highest.

