

Job Opportunities

Mentoring Vital To Nurturing Future Female Scientists

(NAPSA)—Has your daughter or another young girl in your life ever shown interest in helping animals, piloting planes or creating her own toys? If so, it could be a sign that she's primed for a future career in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM). In 2008, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projected that employment in professional scientific and technical services will grow by 34 percent, adding about 2.7 million new jobs by 2018; experts say now is the time to encourage a young girl's interest in these thriving fields.

Despite the growing professional opportunities and market need, women are significantly underrepresented in STEM fields, and research from the 2010 Lemelson-MIT Invention Index identifies a basic hurdle that needs to be overcome: Ninety-one percent of teenage girls say they're interested in one or more of those four subjects, but almost 33 percent might feel discouraged to pursue a related career because they either don't know anyone working in these fields or don't understand what STEM jobs entail.

No doubt that's why many of today's successful female scientists stress the importance of having strong mentors—as all five winners of this year's L'Oréal USA Fellowships For Women in Science did growing up.

"My parents were my first mentors and they taught me the values of education, service, goodwill and humanitarian efforts," says Dr. M. Nia Madison, who's currently researching racial health differences related to HIV infection rates at Meharry Medical College. "It's because of their guidance that I strive to positively impact the lives of those affected by the HIV pandemic."



Girls can learn to love—and learn to make a living from—science and math.

Another 2010 Fellow, Dr. Brenda Bloodgood, a neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School, credits the "chance" a former professor took on her by hiring her to assist in his lab even though she had "little research experience." "He was the one who encouraged me to attend graduate school and become a neuroscientist," Bloodgood says.

With 72 percent of female scientists polled saying they'd recommend a career in science, according to a new survey by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, here are some concrete ways to get your daughter, niece or child of a family friend on the path to a career in STEM:

- **Access your school.** Ask a science teacher for recommendations of local programs or resources that connect young girls to STEM mentors.

- **Explore together.** Visit a science museum, zoo, science or technology fair to make it easier to relate to actual science work that happens daily.

- **Network.** Find someone in your personal or professional life who knows a STEM professional willing to chat with the curious young girl about her future.

- **Do it yourself.** Become a mentor by pointing out everyday examples of science and technology in our lives.