



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 13, 2008

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Introduce Your Daughters to Well Paying and Interesting Careers in Science, Engineering and Technology *BCIU Hosts “Girls in Technology Day” October 25*

READING, PA – Women make up more than 45 percent of the U.S. workforce, yet hold only 12 percent of science and engineering jobs in business and industry.

In addition, jobs in high-tech industries are going begging – the U.S. Office of Technology Policy recently estimated that 190,000 information technology jobs currently are vacant.

So, in an effort to expose girls to career opportunities in science and technology, the Berks County Intermediate Unit and Penn State Berks are hosting “Girls in Technology Day” from 9:00-11:30 a.m., Saturday, October 25, at the BCIU’s River’s Chase building, 1111 Commons Blvd., Reading.

The event is free and open to girls in grades 6-9 and their family members.

“These are important fields for women,” said Susan Calvin, project administrator, distance learning, in the BCIU’s Educational Technology Services department. “These careers pay well. They’re interesting. Yet women still are not flocking to them.

“I hope we can help open their eyes to the opportunities these professions offer.”

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Workshop participants will have the chance to meet with women students from Penn State Berks who are pursuing majors in math, science, physics, bio-chemistry, pre-medicine, pre-veterinary medicine, computer science, and other technology fields to find out why they chose those majors, what types of careers they intend to pursue after graduation, and what it's like to be a student in these fields.

"It's important to talk to young girls," said Amanda Rennig, 21, a PSU Berks senior majoring in life science. "I didn't have any [female] role models until my junior year in high school, when I took an advanced placement biology course, which had a woman teacher. And it occurred to me that perhaps I could be doing something like that."

Rennig has decided to pursue a career in genetic counseling, a field she had never thought of until, as a college freshman, her bio-ethics professor invited a physician from the Reading Hospital to the class to discuss the topic.

"I then was able to shadow a genetic counselor at the hospital for one and a half years," Rennig continued. "That experience clinched it for me."

This will be Rennig's second year volunteering as a panelist at the "Girls in Technology Day" event. Her chosen career field elicited quite a number of questions from the young attendees last year, Rennig said.

"The girls had never heard of genetic counseling before. I could tell they were excited."

Workshop attendees also will get to take a computer apart and put it back together in a hands-on session led by Dr. Robert Lipton, technical project administrator for Educational Technology Services at the BCIU. In addition, a PSU career counselor will advise participants on the courses and extracurricular activities that will best prepare them for college.

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“It’s important to let girls know about careers in math and science,” said Lauren Reinfried, 22, another returning panelist and PSU senior who intends to go on to veterinary medical school. “It’s important to let them know there’s a whole world of opportunities out there. I tell them ‘I didn’t have anyone tell me this when I was your age and it’s important that you think about this now.’”

Parents interested in registering their daughters for the workshop may contact Calvin at suecal@berksiu.org or at 610-987-8639.

Some additional facts regarding women and high-tech careers:

Women constitute 45 percent of the workforce in the U.S., but hold just 12 percent of science and engineering jobs in business and industry. (*National Council for Research on Women, Balancing The Equation: Where are Women & Girls in Science, Engineering & Technology, 2001.*)

From the National Center for Women & Information Technology:

- The number of computer and information-related jobs expected to be added to the U.S. workforce by 2014: **1 million**.
- The percentage of computing and information science undergraduate degree recipients who were women in 2006: **21**.
- The percentage of computer science undergraduate degree recipients who were women in 1985: **37**.
- The percentage **decline** in the number of incoming undergraduate women choosing to major in computer science between 2000 and 2005: **70**.

According to *Tech-Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age*, published by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation:

- Women are roughly 20 percent of IT professionals.
- Women receive fewer than 28 percent of the computer science bachelor's degrees, down from a high of 37 percent in 1984. Computer science is the only field in which women's participation has actually decreased over time.

Of the 10 fastest growing occupations, eight are science, math or technology related (*Before It's Too Late: A Report to the Nation from the National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century, 2000.*)