

SWRMC Seeks STEM Diversity on Capitol Hill

By: Susan Lawson, Commander, Navy Regional Maintenance Center (CNRMC) Public Affairs

WASHINGTON -- Four female engineers from Southwest Regional Maintenance Center (SWRMC) located in San Diego participated in the 2014 Capitol Day Event for Diversity and Inclusion Mar. 5-6 in Washington, D.C.

The event, which drew roughly 70 female engineers and other professionals, is intended to educate congressional members and staffers about the importance of creating a diverse Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) workforce in the U.S.

SWRMC and the Society of Women Engineers sponsored Monique Kadmiri, deputy chief of engineering, as well as Siobhan Williams; Thanhlan Nguyen; and Rebecca Dickey, all of whom are general engineers from SWRMC's engineering department.

SWRMC's commanding officer Capt. Heide Stefanyshyn-Piper, a former NASA astronaut, is also a strong supporter of STEM outreach efforts.

"One of our nation's highest educational priorities is to inspire current and future generations of young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields," said Stefanyshyn-Piper.

Stefanyshyn-Piper recognizes the importance of fostering diversity within her command's mentorship and outreach initiatives, which is why she routinely participates in STEM events, and encourages her employees to follow suit.

SWRMC currently participates in STEM events at Southbay Middle School, actively advocates science programs for youths at the Reuben H. Fleet Center in San Diego, and has hosted shipboard visits and lectures for local area Girl Scouts.

During the Capitol Day event, participants from across the country met with various congressional members and staffers from their respective geographical areas. SWRMC's engineers each had appointments with legislative assistants for Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, as well as Representative Scott Peters.

SWRMC's staff encouraged congressional participants to support STEM outreach programs within key federal agencies including the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

They also discussed the positive influence that STEM outreach initiatives have had on their careers and highlighted the importance of long-term funding support for these programs.

The event also offered the participants an opportunity to better understand each congressional member's STEM interests and priorities, and to request local representatives' support of specific local STEM outreach initiatives.

The command's Engineering Department also plans on leading an engineering competition for minorities and underrepresented students in middle school and high school this summer. The theme of the competition is going to be "Sustainable Energy Technologies."

"There is a wide range of things the students could study, build and demonstrate – model-scale, solar-powered homes or wind farms are some examples. With Congressman Peters' strong support of STEM and conservation initiatives, the SWRMC team looks forward to extending an invitation to him to participate in a SWRMC sponsored STEM event such as this summer engineering competition," said Kadmiri.

According to Kadmiri, many congressional members are not aware of how low the female and minority percentage rates are in STEM-related fields. She said she hopes the event will raise awareness of the need for greater diversity in STEM fields, and see STEM-related bills gain greater support in the House and Senate.

"San Diego is fortunate in that our local representative, Congressman Scott Peters, is already a strong supporter of STEM outreach programs," said Kadmiri.

For more information about Southwest Regional Maintenance Center (SWRMC), visit: <http://www.swrmc.navy.mil/>