

CTG Online News

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CTG Co-Sponsors Microsoft's Third Annual DigiGirlz Day at the University at Albany

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CTG and UAlbany's College of Computing and Information (CCI) co-sponsored Microsoft's third annual DigiGirlz Day on March 14th, a technology event for girls that works to dispel gender stereotypes of careers in the high-tech industry. Through this event, Microsoft aims to educate and inspire the next generation of women IT leaders by introducing them to the considerable opportunities and career choices available.

Over 25 girls from Albany area high schools were selected to participate in the high-energy, content rich day at UAlbany's newly renovated Husted Hall on the downtown campus. The girls were introduced to the latest innovations in technology, interacted and heard from community organizations like UAlbany's CCI, 1st Playable, and the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering along with Microsoft executives, and participated in hands on workshops. Dr. Ann Marie Murray, President of Herkimer Community College was the keynote, focusing on finding/identifying your passion and drive and how that can translate into fulfilling studies and career.

Donna Canestraro, program manager at CTG, working with students during the session on robotics.

Donna Canestraro, program manager at CTG, working with students during the session on robotics. "There is great need in this country to invest more in our science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education for girls," said Theresa Pardo, director of CTG. "Microsoft's DigiGirlz technology programs have a significant impact by increasing awareness of high-tech career choices for high school girls. We are pleased to be able to support their efforts here in Albany."

As part of this year's event, the recently released Sit With Me advocacy campaign designed by the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) was highlighted. The campaign was built as a platform to spark conversation and action around the need for more women in IT related careers. An iconic red chair is used as a symbol to encourage women and men to "sit down" and show solidarity about the important role women play in creating future technology. This iconic red chair was available for participants to "sit" in.

Past statistics are alarming, as they clearly illustrate the lack of adequate female representation in technology courses and careers:

- As an August 2011 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce found, women are still vastly underrepresented in our science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) workforce holding less than 25 percent of STEM jobs. The lack of female role models and gender stereotyping were two possible factors contributing to this discrepancy.
- Women received 18 percent of Computer and Information Sciences undergraduate degrees in 2008, down from a high of 37 percent in 1984. Women's participation in computer science bachelor's degrees has been steadily decreasing since 1984 (National Science Foundation, 2008; NCWIT, 2010).
- Research by the American Association of University Women and other organizations confirms that young girls make important decisions about whether to embrace science and technology in school or careers in their late middle school years or early high-school years. Despite a surplus of available jobs, fewer U.S. girls are signing up for Computer Science when they enter college, resulting in under-representation of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers.
- Since its inception in 2000, Microsoft's DigiGirlz Technology Programs have provided free technology education and interactive experiences to nearly 19,000 students around the world. The DigiGirlz Technology Programs stress the importance of education and show how skills in math and science can help advance technology skills.

For more information, please visit the program site at www.microsoft.com/digigirlz