



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jann Mirchandani
AAUW, Westchester Branch
914-245-8568
jann@aauw-eyhconference.com
For Immediate Release: Monday, March 06, 2006

Westchester Businesses Join Conference Supporting Middle School Girls From Across County

Westchester County — Now in its third year, the Expanding Your Horizons™ (EYH™) in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) conference is enjoying a dramatic increase in corporate sponsorship.

The conference is a half-day filled with hands-on workshops, a “Mystery Women” game and plenty of networking for the 7th-grade girls who attend. Female professionals working in STEM fields act as role models for the girls, encouraging them to continue taking STEM classes so their career options will remain open.

And demand for the conference is strong say organizers from American Association of University Women (AAUW). In its first year all 200 spots sold out and some walk-ins had to be turned away. This year registration is even strong with girls, parents and teachers from Yonkers, Ossining, Mohegan lake and Briarcliff Manor already signed-up.

Area businesses are showing their support for EYH™ by sending employees to lead the workshops, making in-kind donations and sending checks. IBM, Entergy, Estee Lauder and River Deep all have employees who will be giving up their Saturday morning on March 11 to spend time with 150 7th grade girls and their parents and teachers. All workshop leaders bring their own supplies for the workshop and resource room, where information about STEM careers, at-home activities and organizations will be available.

Having hosted 300 girls and 100 adults over the last two years on a shoestring budget, the all-volunteer force behind the conference knows it can be done – but knows it can be done better working with coalition partners. And the in-kind donations they receive are a key part of their success. This year Whole Foods is donating breakfast and snack for the students, parents, teachers and volunteers. SunMaid, CVS, Sharp Electronics, ING Direct and ConEdison are sending everything from raisins, to cameras to calculators. Many of the donations are being used for the “goody bags.”

“They don’t get their bags until we get the evaluations,” says Jann Mirchandani, one of the conference Co-Directors. “The evaluations are really important. They are how we know if we are succeeding and how we can improve.” The response rate with the “goody bag for evaluation” format is 100%.

Support from these new partners is being used to build for the future according to planners, who want to move beyond a “feel-good experience” and measure the effect the conference is having on class selection and attitude toward STEM classes/fields.

All this takes money and businesses are stepping up with checks coming from Entergy, Westchester Office for Women, Mt. Vernon Chamber of Commerce, ConSolidated Appliance and Allstate Aircondition.

With the support of local businesses planners are also able to look towards providing ongoing support in the form of connections to clubs, camps, and networking and resources. Efforts are already underway with Junior Achievers of Westchester to provide girls with mentors.

"We believe this conference makes an important contribution to the girls of Westchester County," says Ida Davis, Development Coordinator, "With the support of our sponsors we can implement programming to measure our effectiveness as well as increase the depth and breadth of our efforts."

The conference is hosted by the AAUW Westchester and New York City Branches in partnership with Barnard College and Westchester Office for Women.

News stories today refer to the diminishing standing of young people in the United States on tests of science knowledge. Further, the decline in the number of native U.S. students in graduate programs in the physical sciences and in engineering over the past two decades has been extensively documented and is a major source of concern to the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and other leading organizations. The percentage of women entering science and engineering careers continues to lag well behind their gains in professional areas such as law and finance. Educational research has repeatedly shown that the critical loss point for young women with initial interest in science is at middle school and early high school ages, grades 7 through 10. This is what AAUW is working to change through EYH™. The conference was recognized at the AAUW National Convention in Washington D.C. this past June.

The conference will be held on Saturday, March 11 at Barnard College. More information about the conference can be found at www.aauw-eyhconference.com. Information about AAUW Westchester Branch can be found at www.aauw-westcheter.org.

###

The American Association of University Women, with its nationwide network of more than 100,000 bipartisan members and 1,300 branches, has been a leading advocate for equity for women and girls since 1881.

AAUW: Because Equity is Still An Issue