

## Girls STEAM Ahead scheduled for March 2

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Nearly 150 girls will come together March 2 for the third annual Girls Steam Ahead 2019 program at Idlewild Country Club. This year's theme is "Major Decisions."

**Meghan Ostermann, who works for SpaceX, tells a group of girls how her math studies in high school help her do her job as a propulsion engineer during the 2018 Girls STEAM Ahead event.**

(Chronicle file photo)



"Girls STEAM Ahead is designed to support young women who have traditionally been underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) education and careers," explained Edie Dobrez, Homewood Science Center executive director.

The program opens with the participants learning of STEAM career choices. More than 70 professional women will be available to meet the girls, seventh grade through high school, share their personal stories and work with the students afterward as a mentor, "so they will persist in their goals," Dobrez added.

The event's guest speaker will be Vicki Repsholdt, vice president of marketing for the U.S. Power division of Schneider Electric. She will share her vital decisions throughout her young adulthood that eventually led to her success and encourage female students to pursue STEAM education and careers.

Organizers have made an effort to include girls from across the South Suburbs and Northwest Indiana so that girls from all walks of life, economic standing and diverse communities participate.

Dobrez predicts long-term gender inequities, often seen in STEAM professions, will be impacted as female students benefit from having access to accomplished female experts across a wide variety of disciplines.

The majority of students registered have limited access to female mentors in STEAM. Professional participants are eager to help girls excel in STEAM and most offer to continue mentoring the students through ongoing support or by sharing internship and volunteer opportunities, Dobrez added.

Girls STEAM Ahead is an initiative of the South Suburban STEAM Network and is free to participants thanks to the generous sponsorship of Schneider Electric.

Enbridge is providing lunch for the students and professional attendees. In addition, Gallagher Asphalt is providing the technology needed to power the event and transportation sponsors Flossmoor Service League and Grant Orthodontics are helping students from low-income school districts attend the event.

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