

Essay by Awardee Amanda Kucharzyk from Sussex Tech High School
Rising Freshman at the University of Delaware Fall 2015

Toni Schmader and Matthias Mehl did a study in 2012 about the gender gap in math and science careers. Most of the gap is actually due to existing, untrue stereotypes. If females are reminded even slightly of the stereotype that men are more fit for science and math, they are discouraged. For this reason, there is a higher dropout rate for women in the math and science degrees. From this study, it seems that women are pressured psychologically to refrain from pursuing math and science careers. I love science, however, and I plan to major in either biology or biochemistry. Because of my positive role models and developed work ethic, I know that I will not get discouraged. Moreover, I attend Sussex Tech High School, and my tech area is electronics. The field of technology is also one still primarily dominated by men, and this is evident in the fact that my class is composed of about 75% boys. When we were studying for our CET certifications, however, we formed a girls versus boys contest for one day just for fun. As it turns out, the girls got more questions right than the boys. This is just one example of how girls empower each other.

In recent years, the focus on 4-H has been about increasing interest in science and technology. They have started a Robotics Club in Sussex County, for example. I always encourage the younger members of my club, especially the girls, to participate in the county events. As a member of 4-H, I also work with youth in various ways. I have served as a counselor at 4-H camps and I have taught classes to younger members at county events. As the oldest member of my local 4-H club, I am required to lead many of the activities and supervise the younger members. I like experiencing each child's unique perspective on life, and I enjoy knowing that I am making a positive impact on them in some way. I believe that working with children has taught me something about the value of patience, happiness, and spontaneity. By working with these children and expressing an attitude of positivity and determination, I hope to serve as a role model for all the young women that I work with. Since children are the future, creating role models is the most important way to increase opportunities for women.

Essay by Awardee Emma Rider from Sussex Tech High School
Rising Freshman at the North Carolina State University Fall 2015

As a middle school student I developed a passion for helping women and children gain access to clean water and it continues to grow. A child dies every 60 seconds due to water borne illness. When I first heard that statistic I could not sleep until I asked WaterStep how to help. WaterStep is a non-profit organization committed to saving lives at risk from waterborne illness anywhere in the world. One way that WaterStep fundraises is by collecting shoes and selling the wearable ones to an exporter. To date I have collected over 100,000 pairs of shoes to fund water projects around the world, enough to provide approximately 100 communities with clean water. Through speaking about my shoe project, I have brought awareness to the greatest global issue affecting the health of women and have inspired other young girls to be leaders in their community and to find their passion and act on it. While working closely with WaterStep my passion began to gain focus on the women who walk an average of six miles daily to provide water for their family. These women are carrying close to 40 pounds of water strapped to their side, their back, or sitting on top of their head. This daily act makes them vulnerable to attack and causes great skeletal damage and can easily be prevented by the use of WaterStep's newest tool, the WaterBall. The WaterBall is a hollow sphere connected to a handle that allows women to roll 100 pounds of water over most terrain with ease. Because these women can haul more water in each trip, more of their time can be spent gaining a skill of their own and their children will have time to go to school. Having a leadership role in my mission trip to Kenya helped to open my eyes to the desire women have for providing their children with opportunities to live better and healthier lives. As I taught the women and children in one orphanage about good health and hygiene practices, I watched them turn around within hours and share what they had learned with their whole community. I plan to use my Horticulture and Leadership in Agriculture degree to continue improving the global issues of hunger and thirst. I will travel with WaterStep into the developing world to continue empowering women to live a healthier and more productive life with safe water.

Essay by Awardee Sarah Buchler from Indian River High School

Rising Freshman at the University of Delaware Fall 2015

There is no doubt women in the 21st century have it good; they consistently compete for top jobs, they shatter typical stereotypes, and the movement for gender equality is at an all time high. However, there are still instances in this world in which women are not able to flourish and become the successful and independent people they aspire to be. As I grow up and become an integral part of society, I hope by becoming a teacher I can prepare young women to truly achieve to the best of their abilities.

Being able to volunteer and lead at a young age has influenced my desire to help everyone, especially youth. I have been very involved with area youth through my volunteering at the local soccer club, coaching Saturdays throughout the year with the Under 6 year olds and with special needs children of all ages through a program called TOPSoccer. Seeing the influence I have in young children's lives through sports is part of what inspired me to pursue education.

I have also practiced my leadership skills through programs like the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership seminars at both the state and national level. Recognizing my leadership skills and utilizing them by organizing my own leadership conferences under the HOBY umbrella the past two years in Sussex County has again reinforced the impact I can have on children. At these conferences, I was hopefully able to inspire young adults, including young women, to realize they can achieve anything on which they focus with a little hard work.

I want to become an elementary teacher with additional certification in English as a Second Language. I know this is not a revolutionary career for women, since for the longest time teaching was one of the only jobs "acceptable" for women. However, I know I can make an impact on women of all ages through my profession. I have been fortunate to have outstanding women educators who have always pushed me to be the best I can be. I hope by educating women at a young age and encouraging them to perform to the best of their abilities, I can inspire them to always pursue their dreams. I believe education is a necessity for women everywhere in opening up opportunities for success, and I am proud to be on my way to become one of the many great women educators.