

INDIVIDUAL PROJECT/ PROGRAM/ EVENT 2011-2012:

Note: Any program since last year's deadline is eligible.

Category: (Please circle or highlight the category for which this program is being submitted.)

- Women – Education – Community – International – Cultural – Diversity – Public Policy

Title: Tech Savvy

Part I:

- 30
- ☒ **Other community groups** involved, if any (list):(5 points) University at Buffalo ✓
 - ☒ **Number of members involved in planning or putting on** the program (5 points) 25 ✓
 - ☒ **Number of nonmembers involved** in the program (5 points) 35 ✓
 - ☒ **Number of members who attended or benefitted** (5 points) 50 ✓
 - ☒ **Number of nonmembers** who attended or benefitted (5 points) 500 ✓
 - ☒ **Number of new members** who joined (if any)(5 points) 2 ✓

Part II:

Describe your project/ program/ event in 75-150 words. Be sure to include:

- ☒ how the project addressed **AAUW's mission** (15 points)
- ☒ **branch goals** in doing this program (10 points)
- ☒ **specific action steps** in planning this program (15 points)
- ☒ steps taken for **community visibility** (Attach newsletter and newspaper articles.)(10 points)
- ☒ measurable **impact on the community** (10 points)
- ☒ **lessons learned** for future programs/ projects/ events (10 points)

Attach copies of newsletter and newspaper articles about this project/ program/ event.

(No more than 4 pages maximum)

Mail or email the original of your entire application with supporting materials to:

- Peggy Kelland, AAUW-NYS Program Vice President
- 13 Susan Lane, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

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Questions? (845)297-0507

AAUW-Buffalo TECH SAVVY

This year found the Buffalo AAUW Branch sponsoring its seventh Tech Savvy Conference. It provides girls in grades 6-9 an opportunity to explore various technical fields in a fun way through workshops and inspiring speakers. In addition, there are "Savvy Skills" workshops designed to prepare them for the working environment. This year the program was expanded to include a separate "SAT Prep" session for girls in grades 10-12 – this was made possible through the AAUW partnership with the Princeton Review. In addition to the activities for the approximately 500 girls, there is a separate track of workshops and networking sessions for the parents and other interested adults – approximately 150 of them this year.

This program has been recognized in two major ways over the past year. First, it was one of four who won the inaugural "Breaking through Barriers" awards at the AAUW national convention in June. Then, in November, Tech Savvy founder and chair Tamara Brown was named as one of President Obama's "Agents of Change" for her work in this field.

This program is a direct response to some of the AAUW research – notably "Why So Few?" Its aim is to make girls aware of the possibilities in the STEM fields – AND to make them aware that they can be part of it!

Betty Preble



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NEWS RELEASE

Annual Tech Savvy Conference for Buffalo Girls to Explore Science/Tech Careers

Gumdrops and games encourage girls to consider the study of science

Release Date: March 16, 2012

BUFFALO, N.Y. Â- Tamara Brown knows if she says the word "polymer" to the average teenage girl, she's likely to be met with a blank stare. She also knows she'll get a much more enthusiastic reception to the word "gumdrop."

Bridging the gap between the candy and the chemical compounds that actually make the stuff is just one of the many events slated to take place at the seventh annual Tech Savvy Conference in UB's Student Union on Saturday, March 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The event is sponsored by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Praxair, Inc. and hosted by the University at Buffalo School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Tech Savvy is the brainchild of Brown, a UB alumna with a master's degree in engineering, who is a member of Praxair's U.S. Project Execution team. She conceived of the idea in 2004, after becoming president of the Buffalo chapter of the AAUW. Aware of the alarming statistics regarding low enrollment for women in college courses such as engineering, she started thinking about ways to open up opportunities, and careers, for women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

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UB alumna in engineering and creator of Tech Savvy, Tamara Brown

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She hit upon the idea of Tech Savvy Â- a conference geared toward middle-school girls, aimed at introducing them to STEM fields in ways that are fun, exciting and relevant to their world. Brown knows making math and science fun is the first step to encouraging girls to consider careers in STEM fields.

For her efforts, Brown earned recognition last year from President Obama as one of 12 "Champions of Change" dedicated to recruiting girls and women to pursue STEM careers.

According to Brown, one of the reasons girls are dissuaded from pursuits in STEM fields is that the young women often don't view science and technology careers as jobs that "help people," something that Brown's research has revealed is important to girls when making career decisions. Brown hopes to combat that false notion with the theme of this year's conference: "Doing Well by Doing Good."

"We want to show the girls that STEM (education and careers) can foster good things, whether it's societal good or environmental good," said Brown.

Participants will learn more about the philanthropic side of science through demonstrations and presentations led by UB faculty as well as by a variety of partnering community groups.

A prime example of showing girls the softer side of science is the robotics demonstration led by Venkat N. Krovi, UB associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering. Krovi and his graduate students will be introducing the participants to haptics, which is tactile feedback technology, or as Krovi likes to call it, "the touchy-feely side of robotics."

By getting girls to see science and technology in a less intimidating light, Krovi hopes more girls will become interested in fields like robotics, especially when they see all the service-oriented applications that are possible with technology, such as medical robotics and toy design.

John Ringland, UB associate professor of mathematics, will be conducting "MathÂ...Worlds to Explore," and will be introducing participants to Conway's Game of Life, a zero-player game which mimics population growth and can result in interesting patterns.

"Math is much broader," Ringland said. "It's about patterns in general; it's a process of exploration."

Ringland hopes that the young girls at the event can begin to see those patterns, and in doing so will realize

that math is a tool which can be used across a variety of fields, instead of something that is impractical in the real world.

"This event is fun for us," Ringland said. "Hopefully some of our enthusiasm will rub off on the participants and they'll start to see math in a new light."

Several other UB professors and students will be conducting workshops as well, on myriad topics including community planning, the environmental impact of oil spills, earthquake relief response, medicine and energy production.

Brown has also enlisted the help of several community agencies to give the girls even more options.

"We look at future careers; we look at what's hot, like green jobs. We look at what is realistic. And then we look in the Buffalo community for collaboration," Brown said. "It's amazing how many connections you make."

The girls attending Tech Savvy reap the rewards of those connections, having the opportunity to participate in workshops led by Roswell Park, Praxair, Independent Health, the National Weather Service, Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER and the FBI.

Brown estimates that in the past six years, over 1,000 girls have participated in Tech Savvy, many of them coming back year after year.

It is these older girls, the ones who have grown up in the Tech Savvy program, and are now in high school, that Brown had in mind when she decided to launch the newest component of her program "Tech Savvy Girls on a Roll." Designed specifically for 10th grade girls, this portion of Tech Savvy is presented in partnership with Princeton Review, and is designed to introduce the girls to the SAT by allowing them to sit for a moderated practice exam.

Tech Savvy also has a session for parents who wish to attend along with their daughters. This year the presenters will discuss bullying, financial preparedness, academic achievement, public policy that impacts education and grassroots movements that are advocating for more reform and resources.