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Registration open for UK's Expanding Your Horizons Conference

By Carol Lea Spence

LEXINGTON, Ky., (Feb. 22, 2019) — The University of Kentucky is hosting the third annual Expanding Your Horizons Conference for middle school girls and their parents or guardians from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EDT April 20. This day of hands-on workshops will inform young Kentucky girls and their parents about exciting career opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Women continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, and they hold a disproportionately low share of STEM undergraduate degrees, particularly in engineering, according to a study from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"Many higher education institutions like UK struggle against the problem of poor retention of female undergraduates in a lot of science, engineering and math majors," said Ellen Crocker, assistant professor in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources and an event coordinator. "I think one of the reasons for that is girls often lack role models in those fields. Without those role models, maybe they don't realize the options that exist."

Expanding Your Horizons introduces the young students to women who are either pursuing a STEM degree or are working in one of the fields. Each workshop involves girls in fun and challenging hands-on math, science and engineering activities led by women mathematicians, scientists and engineers. This year's workshop categories include biology, chemistry, engineering and physics, environmental sciences, mathematics and computer science.

A concurrent session for parents at no extra cost is designed to help them deal with challenges their daughters may face as they consider STEM careers. Parental workshops are How Gender Stereotypes Impact Girls in STEM; College Search and College Admissions; Discover Your Inner Scientist and Engineer; and What I Wish I knew in Middle School, a Q&A session with women in STEM.

From her own experience, Carmen Agouridis, event coordinator and extension associate professor in the UK Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, believes that STEM fields offer a wealth of opportunities to make a positive impact in people's lives.

"To find solutions to the challenges our society faces, we need to use all our brightest minds, regardless of gender, race or ethnicity. Our whole nation benefits when women have the

same opportunities as their male counterparts. I want girls and women, when they visualize scientists and engineers, to see themselves in those positions,” she said.

There is room for 200 students in the workshop. The registration fee is \$25 per student, but scholarships are available. Contact Agouridis at carmen.agouridis@uky.edu before registering to request a scholarship. Funding from UK and Kentucky National Science Foundation EPSCoR helps with program costs.

Middle school students and their parents who wish to register for Expanding Your Horizons can do so online at <http://www.uky.edu/bae/eyh>.

The UK colleges of Agriculture, Food and Environment; Arts and Sciences; and Engineering are hosts for the conference.

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UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, through its land-grant mission, reaches across the commonwealth with teaching, research and extension to enhance the lives of Kentuckians.