

Careers 4 Girls in Technology – Connecting cultures and creating career pathways

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Kelly Lanier Arnold

Project Manager (InConsulting) - Microsoft Cloud Operations + Innovations (CO+I) GDCO

I'm so proud of all the women and girls who participated in the November 4th Careers 4 Girls in IT 2-hour virtual event in collaboration with Southside Virginia Community College and Microsoft. Given 56% of young women do not know a female working in a STEM field according to Microsoft and KRC Research, the event was designed to provide exposure to STEM jobs and role models examples of successful women in IT who can foster an understanding of career pathways, help to build confidence, and erode misconceptions.

Because teen girls tend to respond to their peers, the event began with eight students presenting on the theme "Girls Can". This peer-to-peer learning was particularly special and generated excitement as it connected high school and college students on both sides of the

Atlantic. Irish students from Scoil Mhurie Clane, Colaiste Bride Presentation Secondary School, Collinstown Park Community College, Kishoge Community College, St. Kevin's Community College, and Lucan Community College in Dublin, Ireland, met online with American students from Brunswick High School in Lawrenceville, and Southside Virginia Community College, South Hill, Virginia, to share, listen, and learn from each other and their cultural differences.

The attendees also heard a diverse panel of women leaders who emphasized the value of more women choosing STEM careers while also sharing stories of their sometimes challenging but rewarding career journeys. Microsoft's Utakwa Allen, Senior Director, Datacenter Community Development Team, set the tone for the event, inspiring the girls with the success story of Mae Jemison, the first Black woman in space. Panelists included Krystle Pearson, Director of Technology at Brunswick County High Schools, and Microsoft's Maritzabel Del Pozo, Service Engineer; Christian Jackson, Microsoft Datacenter Academy Scholar, Intern, and current Old Dominion University student; Marisa Ronan, Program Manager; and Pepsy Wirth, XBOX Chief of Staff.

Microsoft Corporate Vice President of Cloud Operations & Innovations, Noelle Walsh-Elwell, who is from County Kildare, Ireland, closed out the event by emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion as well as Microsoft's desire to increase the number of women in technology on a global scale. Noelle ended her

talk by providing encouragement to the women and girls by advising, “Be brave and think big”.

LINK: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kelly-arnold_womenintechnology-stem-careers-activity-6732399163415269376-ITaR