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Construction Institute's 3rd Annual Women Who Build Summit - February 22

March 30, 2018 - Spotlights

East Hartford, CT In today's workplace, taking a day away from work to reflect on our careers and to hear from industry leaders is a rare and valuable opportunity. On February 22, more than 200 participants gathered for the Construction Institute's 3rd Annual Women Who Build Summit. The summit focused on leadership and career development. It was a day of inspiration, education and networking. The attendees represented the diversity of professions that it takes to design, construct and maintain the built environment and included representation from every generation in the industry.

Although the speakers at the summit all came from varying backgrounds and experiences, common themes emerged from their insights, including some core values - hard work, flexibility, passion, creativity and persistence. For example, in her opening keynote, Melody Currey, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services, shared that hard work and a passion for public service created opportunities in her career that she had never before imagined. That theme was echoed by Diane Petra of Petra Construction Corp., who shared with the audience lessons that she learned from her father that are at the core of her business values - "Be on time and be prepared." Joyce Reynolds of Reynolds Welding and Fabrication, LLC, is no stranger to hard work. "When you own your own business, you are working against the clock, because there is never enough time."

Being flexible and creative in your approach to your career, your business, and your day-to-day work was a recurring theme. Commissioner Currey emphasized the importance of being open to the ways in which your career path may change based on each opportunity presented. Being creative in your approach to work was a theme of the panel of industry innovators, moderated by Laura Pirie of Pirie Associates Architects. The panel included women who work in a broad range of innovation – from technological innovations like virtual reality and sophisticated customized modular construction to process innovations. They shared their take on innovation - "Innovation does not come from new technology, or new materials, or new products. Innovation comes from vision and need – from seeing the potential to solve a problem better than before – when no one knows there is a problem to be solve. This means innovation, although it looks like it's way out there, comes from being right here. In the thick of it, seeing what others cannot yet see." Following a theme of creativity, the Bolder Company got attendees on their feet at multiple points with their networking training using an improv approach, reminding them to "be playful" and to make our partners look good.

Dr. Anamaria Popescu, PE, PMP, PSP, director, construction practice, at the Berkley Research

Group, the afternoon keynote, talked about the path that led from her childhood in Romania to her current position. She echoed the value of hard work as underlying her success and also emphasized the value of persistence. She shared with us a favorite quote from Calvin Coolidge: “Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not: unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

The afternoon panel discussed how finding your passion can bring you to opportunities to do good in the world. These professionals discussed mentoring young people in the ACE Mentoring Program that introduces them to the industry, leading a national award winning STEM high school in an urban setting with a diverse ethnicity, providing needed skills to support the homeless through Hartford Habitat for Humanity, and working to design humane and well-functioning refugee camps.

How can we find our own path to success? Cindy Hersom of Dicin Electric Co., Inc., gave this advice “Don’t be afraid to be yourself. Be courageous. Be authentic. Be resilient.”

To see a complete list of presenters, visit <http://construction.org/event/4thAnnualWomenWhoBuild>.

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