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Girl Scouts of Eastern Mass., in partnership with Suffolk, launch STEM-based “Brownies Who Build” curriculum and patch program

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The Girl Scout Brownies took part in a STEM activity at Suffolk, building structures with uncooked spaghetti that could support the weight of a marshmallow

Waltham, MA Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts (GSEMA) recently revealed its newest STEM curriculum in partnership with Suffolk, one of the largest and most innovative construction and real estate enterprises in the country. “Brownies Who Build,” an expansion to “Juniors Who Build,” which launched in 2023, was created to help Girl Scouts ages 7-9 understand the steps of the construction process, potential construction careers, and steps to building something themselves.

The organizations kicked off the “Brownies Who Build” curriculum with an in-person event at Suffolk, where troops received a tour of Suffolk’s Boston headquarters, engaged in a hands-on STEM activity, and participated in a career panel with some of Suffolk’s female leaders.

Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are critical to successfully navigating today’s modern and connected world. As a result, there has been exponential growth in STEM occupations; over the last thirty years, employment in STEM careers has grown 79% and is projected to continue to increase. Despite this rapid growth, women remain vastly underrepresented in the STEM workforce. Women comprise about half of the total workforce but only 34% of the STEM workforce and have lower median salaries than their male counterparts. At the collegiate level, women hold the majority of bachelor’s degrees overall (57% in 2019) but a significantly smaller share of STEM bachelor’s degrees (39% in 2019).

Data from the Girl Scout Research Institute demonstrate the impact of exposure to STEM education achieved through participation in Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scout girls to pursue an interest in STEM careers and topics – including app development, robotics, coding and cybersecurity, and Girl Scouts maintain their interest in STEM throughout adolescence, while girls who have not participated in Girl Scouts demonstrate a decreased interest in STEM after middle school.

Suffolk senior marketing manager Casey Galante shows Girl Scout Brownies how digital modeling is significant to the building process on one of Suffolk’s many Microsoft Surface Hubs, positioned throughout their headquarters office.

The “Brownies Who Build” curriculum takes Girl Scouts through a five-step process of constructing a school, with options to choose an activity for each step. Upon completion of the program, Girl Scouts will be armed with knowledge of design and coordination, cost and estimation, planning, site management and safety, and trades coordination.

“For over 100 years, Girl Scouts have taken the lead in providing opportunities to girls to discover, connect, and take action through STEM. Starting with the Electrician badge in 1916, Girl Scouts has provided fun, hands-on, and educational STEM activities to girls, facilitated by supportive adult volunteers,” said GSEMA CEO Barbara Fortier. “We thank Suffolk for their generosity, partnership, mentorship and commitment to providing Girl Scouts with this unique skill-building experience.”

The new curriculum is part of Suffolk’s 10-year partnership with GSEMA which seeks to diversify and strengthen the STEM pipeline by providing the resources and education that young women and girls need to pursue STEM careers. Suffolk’s “Rebuild the Ratio” initiative aims to bring 10 percent of all Girl Scouts in eastern Massachusetts through the curriculum in an effort to inspire interest in

construction-related careers and to help bridge the gender equality gap in the industry.

“Our alliance with GSEMA and our Suffolk ‘Rebuild the Ratio’ initiative underscore our pledge to bridge the gender divide in construction and STEM vocations,” stated Keith Couch, General Manager of Suffolk’s Northeast Region. “As we strive to realize this bold vision, we encourage other organizations and industries to inspire young women to pursue rewarding career paths in STEM.”

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