



JENNIFER STIMPSON | 2020 MAURA WOMEN HELPING WOMEN AWARD RECIPIENT

LEADERSHIP FORUM VIRTUAL EVENT SERIES Q&A

How do we get our teens interesting in science from a very basic level? Are there any tips to use over this summer?

Teens, as I define them, are kids going into HS so 9th-12th grade. During this developmental time, they are curious about so many things. They are probably expressing interest in much more social vs. academic adventures. However, those who have a strong or even moderate interest in science should spend time researching and discovering what particular field of science they are interested in. There are so many “science fields” these days. I encourage you to help your teen define what exactly it is about science they like. Science has evolved from “doing experiments” to applying knowledge to test theories, and that looks different based on what fields they are curious about. Might I suggest that you look at sites that help students design and construct, troubleshoot, and experiment with many different systems, including Fast-Plants, LEGOs, bones, aquariums, and electrical circuits. Additionally, students at this age use a systems approach to solving problems considering physical, chemical, and biological perspectives that incorporate mathematics and technology to facilitate their understanding of earth systems.

What women have inspired you, Dr. Stimpson, and why?

I’ve been inspired by my mother. All that I am, and hope to become, I owe to her. My Aunt Minnie is another one who has guided me to become the woman I am. If we look at those women who are “celebrity” caliber, allow me to say, I am a follower of the gospel according to Oprah and Michelle Obama.

Locally, I am inspired by Nicole Small, and the work she does to build girls’ knowledge in STEM. Liza Lee and Jeanne Whitman have been supportive of me. My personal friends, who, through their leadership, serve with dedication and grace here locally: Michelle Thomas, Mylayna Albright, Jessica Dixon Weaver, Angela Ross, Catherine Cuellar, Jenny King, Sarah Jackson and Janiece Evans-Page. And my sweet mentor-friends who answer my many calls/texts: Shonn Brown, Jill Louis and Deborah Hunter Johnson.

What programs are you covering in your summer programs? Are you still interested in forensic science?

I have not planned any summer classes for 2020. I am definitely interested in forensic science. It is in my blood and in my professional past that I will always look to offer to students.

What advice do you have for young women getting ready to graduate from college?

- Getting ready/entering final year: As students prepare for their final year in college, I would use this summer to outline what classes will help define a meaningful final year. What are they hoping to get out of their college experiences? Which courses will build that experience? I would also start investigating post-college plans: graduate school? Start taking the necessary tests (MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, GRE, etc.). Take one this summer/fall and another in January, and submit the scores to the schools of their choice: NOTICE the score should arrive AFTER the application, not before....so now is a good time to start filling out the apps.
- Not going to graduate/law/medical/nursing school after graduation and home to work/relax/gap year? Please use that time to secure the best employment. In the time of COVID and social distancing, it will be important to have a resume that speaks to the ability to adapt and show leadership and flexibility. It does not hurt to look for obtaining licenses: lifeguard, pharmacy tech or teaching assist.
- Getting ready/graduating between May-August 2020: Same as previous.

What do you do to inspire your students to begin to model a “fishing rod” behavior?

Fishing rod leadership – cast your line far out. You will reach someone, bring them in slowly, allowing their environment to shape them toward your shores. When they reach you, they are ready to serve others through leadership. How I share that model with my students is by offering them opportunities to cast their one lines. I make every lesson a STEM/Science Career lesson. When I do that, I make sure they see themselves doing that job. I “reel” them in by sharing stories, activities and options to speak to professionals who actually do the work, etc. So that when they hit the shores as women ready to lead, they have been “groomed by the waters of their environment.”

How have you combined your social passions and interests for yourself and others?

To increase academic exposure and opportunity for disadvantaged and poor children of color, I created Get a KIC Out of Science through Knowledge In Chemistry (KIC) — a weekend and summer science enrichment camp exposing middle school students from under-resourced communities to science programming. The vision of KIC is to encourage students to explore science through education and innovation. By exposing students to STEM careers and advancing the development of a scientifically literate society, KIC offers participating campers a better future.

In 2016, I self-designed a t-shirt to highlight the historical significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As an alum of Dillard University, I appreciate the experiences I had learning and connecting science to history. The small classes and personal attention from each of my professors made it feel more as if I was learning from family. My t-shirts send the message that HBCUs are the elements of educational success. Notably, HBCUs produce large numbers of African Americans graduating with STEM degrees. I myself completed a degree in chemistry in the heart of New Orleans!

My leadership in STEM also extends beyond the classroom through lectures on how communities, middle schools, research professors, and science teachers can nurture students to engage with students about the possibilities and wonders of science. Currently, I also serve on the STEM Advisory Board of the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas.

My work as a forensic chemist won a 1998 administrators award from the Drug Enforcement Agency. In 2008 *O: The Oprah Magazine* featured me as a “Rock Star Scientist,” I was a finalist for the Steve Harvey Show’s teacher of the year award, and I received an Inspiration Grant from Michael Jordan Foundation. The City of Dallas and congress issued proclamations hailing my work developing an alternative the biodiesel fuel source for county school buses by using leftover grease from the school cafeteria. In 2017 I was one of the Hidden Figures of STEM honored by the Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE); I was featured in the Texas Women’s Foundation’s first STEM trading cards; and the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce honored me for Excellence in Education. I was recognized among *Ebony Magazine’s* 2018 People’s Choice Nominees, and the same year Walker’s Legacy Foundation named me one of the Top 15 Women in Business Leadership for my company jSTEMp Science — which offers KIC camps.

Most recently, this year I was selected among the inaugural class of STEM ambassadors in the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) IF/THEN program. As an F/THEN ambassador, my STEM journey will empower current innovators and inspire the next generation of pioneers through my many uses of science, technology, engineering, and math to solve problems and create new possibilities for the future.

If you had to give your elevator speech, what is your why?

I want to inspire students about the wonders and possibilities of science through education and innovation. I want to raise their consciousness level to connect people to see how science is part of their everyday experiences. Science requires creative imagination. Human curiosity sparks scientific exploration which continues as each discovery generates new questions.

What’s next for you, and how can Texas Women’s Foundation help?

This fall, I will be an Albert Einstein Fellow with the Department of Energy in Washington, DC. As a fellow, I will work with federal legislators to inform science policy and offer education expertise. This esteemed honor is one I am truly looking forward to as it allows me to blend my experiences as a classroom teacher with federal policy. Who knows, maybe I will draft a bill that could become law. Stay tuned! I would love to work with TWF to develop a curriculum that could be adjusted to teach young girls about leadership. Since the students are our future, it would be wonderful to nurture them on a journey toward leadership. I’ll follow up with Ros!

What are on-line ways to get girls interested in science?

I would look at sites below as starters:

- Girlscouts.org
- Stemvillage.com
- <https://ngcproject.org/>