



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mayor Jacobs to Recognize Women in STEAM

Knoxville, Tennessee—Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs will observe Women’s History Month throughout March by sharing videos each Wednesday highlighting time spent in different Knox County Schools’ Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) classrooms taught by female teachers.

Today’s [video](#) features a visit with West Valley Middle School science Bethany Saunders who was teaching seventh graders about genetics and how traits are passed. Mayor Jacobs joined the class in creating genetically unique monsters using a matrix of dominant and recessive genes.

“It is a really innovative way of teaching this,” said Mayor Jacobs. “It’s really great to see kids exposed to concepts like this and I think it’s going to stick more than just opening a textbook up and reading the words out of it.”

Saunders is a tenured 14-year educator and was honored in 2021 as one of the state’s finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. She will also soon be inducted into the University of Tennessee’s College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences Hall of Honor.

In her classroom, Saunders says, “Students aren’t just learning science, they’re learning to critically think, and problem solve. As they go through and think about what type of job they’re going to have one day I can probably relate any job that they do to scientific concepts of thinking and reasoning.”

Mayor Jacobs said celebrating women in STEAM is important for young girls because it shows them that women can succeed in technical fields—industry typically driven by men.

The Mayor will also share his visits with Hardin Valley Elementary STEM Educator Jessica Everitt, South Doyle High School STEM/Computer Science Teacher Kathleen Devinney, Gibbs Middle School Art Teacher Dorothy Verbick and STEM Teacher Lauren Downs; and Karns Middle School Math Teacher Rebecca Layton.

Women’s History Month became a national celebration when congress requested President Ronald Reagan to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982, as Women’s History Week. Petitioned by the National Women’s History Project, Congress designated the month of March 1987 as Women’s History Month. In 1995, it became an annual recognition of the contributions women have made to the United States and the specific achievements women have made over the course of American History in a variety of fields.

STEM classes aim to equip students with the skills and knowledge to compete in a global economy across science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines. STEAM classes do the same while also emphasizing soft skills and the arts including humanities, language arts, dance, drama, music, visual art, design, new media, and more. Research shows the number of roles requiring STEM expertise is growing at a rate that exceeds current workforce. Additionally, a 2019 LinkedIn report found that skills like creativity, persuasion, and collaboration are some of the most important to companies seeking prospective employees.

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