



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mayor Jacobs Continues Recognition of Women in STEAM

Knoxville, Tennessee—Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs is observing 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 Gibbs Middle School art teacher Dorothy Verbick and STEM teacher Lauren Downs who collaborate often, allowing their students more opportunities to learn and create using traditional methods and emerging technologies.

“Even for kids who may not be inclined to technology, when you show them, art is a part of it, I think it really opens up a different world for them,” said Mayor Jacobs.

Downs taught math for six years before achieving a master’s degree in educational technology and media and has dedicated the last 5 years to STEM education.

“I like that my students see me in a STEM role as a female. If they’re a girl or a boy, if you have that STEM background, it’s going to let you do more in the future. I don’t personally feel you can have engineering and design without art and creativity,” said Downs.

Verbick is a dedicated artist with 12 years of teaching experience and holds a bachelor’s in fine arts with a master’s in teaching. Through a creative STEM partnership, Verbick and Downs work on numerous projects highlighting the intersection of art and technology.

“Art teaches creative thinking and problem solving. In every aspect we do there is art. From design and the idea of design thinking to science and engineering, prototyping and things like that. We do a lot of that in our classes,” said Verbick.

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 has already shared his visits with [South Doyle High School STEM](#) teacher Kathleen Devinney, [Hardin Valley Elementary](#) STEM Educators Jessica Everitt and Jana Yra, and [West Valley Middle](#) science teacher Bethany Saunders.

Next week, he will share visit with Karns Middle School Math Teacher Rebecca Layton.

Background: 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.

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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