

Group Promotes Careers for Women in Science

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Lauren Haven's 13-year-old daughter Brenna loves science, especially biology. But she's not sure if science is, well, you know, cool. She thinks working for a scientific company when she grows up might be boring. So her mother decided to give her daughter's scientific interest a shot in the arm, signing her up for a career day put on by a local organization called

Women In Bio.

"As kids get older they start to feel the impact of what's cool and what's not cool," said Lauren Haven of Germantown. "I thought it would be a great experience for her to see that science as a profession is cool. That you can do good things for people. That it's not geeky people doing science."

Brenna was game. She worried about missing basketball practice, but her mother said she is looking forward to spending a few hours this Thursday at MedImmune Inc., the Gaithersburg biotech firm. More than 100 middle school students from the Washington area have signed up to hear MedImmune's female scientists and executives -- including Chief Financial Officer Lota S. Zoth and corporate communications vice president Lori Weiman -- discuss science career opportunities. There will also be tours of the company's labs.

"We're hoping these girls will think about science and entrepreneurship as a career," said Women In Bio President Robbie Melton, whose organization provides networking opportunities for female biotech workers.

A lot of women already find biotech cool. Women account for about half of the 20,000 biotech employees in Maryland, according to C. Robert Eaton, president of MdBio Inc., an organization that promotes the industry. More than 50 women have started their own companies, including Carol Nancy (Sequella Inc.), Sharon Mates (Functional Genetics Inc.), and Martine A. Rothblatt (United Therapeutics Corp.).

The list goes on. Rita Colwell is heading up the newly formed Canon Life Sciences, a subsidiary of the camera company. Jennie Hunter-Cevera is president of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute. Kathleen Ordonez is the president of Celera Genomics Group in Rockville.

And Brenna Haven? Check back in 10 or 15 years.

-- Michael S. Rosenwald

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