"I realized that if I was willing to step up and be in the spotlight, I'd be able to make everyone else around me much more powerful as well."

– Alaina Percival, CEO, Women Who Code

The Gift of Support
By Ursula Towne

I have just come from a pleasant member gathering at our annual SWE Central Illinois picnic event. It was a wonderfully well-planned event by our Work, Life, Integration committee. I am glad to have such competent and dedicated committee members working for us this year. In all the activity, I notice there has been a trend lately of sudden changes in members’ lives from retiring or moving, bringing new lives into this world, or supporting their family members who need them, some of whom may be a long plane flight away. Maybe they are sending kids off on their own adventures starting jobs and going to college. Change can be incredibly tough at times even unadvised.

I had a manager once tell me never to do the dreaded “3” all at the same time. I was young and naive and didn’t know what he was talking about. He informed me that you never want to move, change companies, and have a baby at the same time. However, being young, naive, and honestly much braver than I am today, I didn’t listen as I left for a new job while 4 months pregnant. In a year my husband and I were laid off the same day. We ended up hastily moving to a new country with our young son where I didn’t have a work visa. Only one person in a married couple was allowed to have a work visa in that country at the time. I went from working as an engineer to be a full-time mom. It was a huge change for me, and one I felt I did completely in isolation.

I wonder how things may have been different for me had I been a member of SWE at the time. I know that as I see all these changes now in the lives of fellow SWE members that I think privately how wonderful and brave all these women are. I have realized that I don’t have to always be the bravest. I don’t have to do everything alone to make a difference. In fact, quite the opposite is true if you want to do great things. We all exist within a framework of support of our choosing, and through SWE I have made friends that have gotten me through terrible times. It is times like these when I truly realize behind a successful woman is a tribe of successful women who have her back. This more than anything is what SWE has meant for me. We need to be lifting each other up. Reach out to that new member and invite them along for a professional development event. See if that co-worker who is struggling wants to talk over lunch. Being wise enough to look beyond your own life and see who could use your help is a tremendous gift.

“Behind every successful woman is a tribe of successful women who have her back.” - Unknown

Leadership Introduction: Thuong Le

Hello SWE-CI members! Thank you for electing me as your SWE-CI Secretary.
On a professional level, I have been with Caterpillar for 16 years. Currently, I am the LWL Core Electro-Hydraulic Implements Subsystem Lead with responsibility for requirements management, functional safety, FMEA, verification and tests, software library development, NPI/CPI resolution, feature development, on machine tuning development, and anomaly resolution for all Large Wheel Loader, Large Wheel Dozer Legacy, and OEA programs. As part of my job, I've operated machines and worked with operators at both the Peoria and Tucson Proving Grounds.

On the personal level, I am married with two young kids. Now that I am a mother myself, I am most proud of being my mother's daughter and I considered myself to be very lucky to be her daughter. I was born a few years after the Vietnam war, and as a result the country was going through significant changes; both politically and socio-economically. A little before I turned one, my dad had escaped from Vietnam and immigrated over to America in hope of a better future for our family. For many years, my mom had taken me on numerous “adventures”, trying to re-unite our family. She endured many hardships to ensure the future that I now have. When I was around five, I vividly remembered spending nights on a wooden fisherman’s boat, and getting caught by the Viet Cong. Afterwards, we would be sent to a camp for people not obeying the new government policy. While at the camp, my mom would continue to ensure that I was educated by teaching me how to read, and basic mathematics until we were released from the camp. This way I wouldn’t be behind other kids when I was able to go back to school. This cycle would repeat numerous times, until the US & Vietnamese Governments worked together to allow family members to immigrate to Vietnam. Our family was reunited after 10 years of separation.

I’m glad to be a part of SWE-CI. I hope SWE-CI will continue being a supportive network that encourages each other to be brave, self-less, and resilient. My wish is for SWE-CI members to be positive role models for everyone around us, like how my mother had been for me.

WE19 - Registration has Begun!

WE19 is happening November 7-9 in Anaheim, CA!

Join SWE for more than 250 professional development sessions to help you advance in your career. There will be leaders sharing their insights on succeeding in engineering, and you can attend the top career fair for women in engineering. Consider signing up today!

More Information: https://we19.swe.org/


Schedule of Events: https://we19.swe.org/attendee/conference-schedule/

Ignite Peoria - Aug 10th

SWE outreach had a booth at Ignite Peoria to promote their upcoming Pre-Engineering class. Ignite Peoria is an event held by Arts Partners of Central Illinois. The kids had a great time decorating laser cut frog ear bud holders to take home. (The November 2nd session of the Pre-Engineering class will be laser cutting using Tinkercad!)
Upcoming Outreach Events

Pre-Engineering classes
Nov 2, 2019 - Laser cutting using TinkerCad
Jan 11, 2020- 3D printing using TinkerCad
May 9, 2020- Electrical Circuit design using TinkerCad
All classes will be held at RiverCity Labs in Peoria, IL on Saturdays 10 AM-11:30 AM.
The charge is $5 per student.
Sign up via Facebook, or email classes@RiverCityLabs.space
Paypal payment (rivercitylab@gmail.com) should received one week before start of class.
The class can only have 20 students, but needs a minimum of 5 students.

Big Tap Campout
Get involved in one of Girl Scout of Central Illinois' Signature Events and make a difference in the lives of the 250+ girls who will be attending! Share nature, STEM, the arts, traditional camp, healthy living, environmental awareness, and financial literacy in different formats - 30 mins to 1 hour per class, plus booths, acts/shows, and outdoor activities over the 600+ camp!
Date: Saturday, Sep 28th
Time: 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Location: Camp Tapawingo 1450 Hickory Point Road, Metamora, IL
Volunteer Sign Up Link: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0D4FAFAB2EA0F94-20192

Dream Center STEM Teen Teacher Program
Date: Starting Friday September 20th, Every Friday after school for PPS district
Time: 3:00 PM - 5:30 PM
Location: 714 Hamilton Blvd, Peoria IL
STEAM
Check out the Discover STEAM website, it’s a great resource for parents! Discover STEAM is a collaboration among several educational, non-profit, and commercial institutions in Greater Peoria. Share it with any parents who would like to see their kids get involved in learning activities!
https://www.discoversteam.org/

SWE-CI Spotlight Member
Meet Laura Ruiz-Santamaria
I am currently a Material Requirements Planning Manager for Caterpillar at its Undercarriage facility located in East Peoria, IL. I grew up in central Mexico and moved to the US to continue my studies after high school. As a young girl, I was privileged to have strong role models like my mom, a biologist, and my aunt, an Industrial Engineer. Following their footsteps, I enrolled at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) to pursue an engineering degree. In 2013, I graduated from UIC with a MS. Industrial Engineering and a BS Industrial Engineering in 2010. I started my career with Caterpillar in 2012 when I had the opportunity to obtain a co-op position with the Design for Manufacturing and Assembly group in East Peoria, IL. This internship then led to a full-time position in 2013 as a Logistics Analyst. Being with Caterpillar has allowed me to explore roles in different areas such as Logistics, Manufacturing Engineering, Operations, and now Supply Chain; for which I feel very fortunate.

This year marked my 10th year anniversary as a SWE member. Encouraged by my mentor to become a professional member, I began to take a more active role within SWE. SWE has allowed me to continue sharing my passion for engineering and being a STEM role model, while advocating for diversity and inclusion in the workforce. Through SWE, I have been able to participate in outreach and professional development events, and to grow my professional network. Some of my favorite experiences with SWE have been “Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day” and Junior Achievement. I am grateful for the role models and experiences I’ve been exposed to through SWE. I hope I can continue to give back and encourage future engineers and others interested in the STEM fields.

Annual Membership Picnic
Thanks to everyone who was able to attend the Fall Membership Picnic on Sept 8th. It was a great time to catch up with each other, and enjoy the beautiful view the West Pavilion in Fondulac Park had to offer.

Be on the lookout for more details about our next event, Fall Pottery Painting to be held in early November.

Heather Ulrich
WLI Committee Chair
SWE Central Illinois Awards - Call for Nominations!

SWE-CI announces a call for nominations for three awards: Distinguished Member, Outstanding Engineer, and Outstanding Advocate.

Nominations are due to Awards Committee Chair Sowmya Nagesh (sowmya.nagesh@gmail.com) by Oct 9th. Reach out to Sowmya for questions about the awards, the nomination process, or getting the nomination forms.

The Distinguished Member Award honors women who have been actively engaged in the Central Illinois Section of the Society of Women Engineers. The nominee must have demonstrated outstanding support and participation in the furthering of technical understanding or interest in young women.

The Outstanding Engineer Award is awarded to a qualified woman who has made significant contributions in the field of engineering and/or technical management. She need not be a member of the Society.

The Outstanding Advocate Award recognizes individuals who advocate for the inclusion and success of women, both present and prospective, in engineering and technology. The nominee must have demonstrated outstanding advocacy for women and girls in engineering and technology.

SWE Webinars

To register or learn more, click on each webinar.

(2019-09-26) Shaping your Postdoc for Success

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Member Price $0.00 USD
Non Member Price $29.00 USD

Purchase

Join us for this live web session on Thursday, September 26, 2019 @ 1 PM CT.
Tip: Import SWE-CI's Google Calendar -- no typing needed!

Big Tap Campout
Camp Tapawingo - 1450 Hickory Point Rd
Saturday, Sep 28th
3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Metamora, IL

Monthly Executive Council Meeting
Peoria North Branch Library – Seminar Room
Wednesday, October 2nd
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Peoria, IL

Dream Center STEM Teen Teacher Program
714 Hamilton Blvd
Starting Friday September 20th, Every Friday after school for PPS district
3:00 PM - 5:30 PM
Peoria, IL

Girls Who Code (GWC)
Illinois Math Academy (University and Pioneer Park)
Every Monday, Sep 9th - May 19th
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
Peoria, IL

Girls Who Code Club - Tri-County Urban League
Every Tuesday night, Sep 9th - May 19th
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
Peoria, IL

Missed an issue of our Monthly Buzz? Catch up with the Buzz Archives.