

PRESS RELEASE:

## **AAUW Atlantic County and Atlantic Cape Community College Hosts STEM Careers Event for Teen Girls**

Date: May 25, 2022 8:30am - 2:00pm

Location: Atlantic Cape Community College, 5100 Black Horse Pike, Mays Landing, NJ 08330

“This is absolutely amazing!” exclaimed Arabella Lankin, as she worked with her team to guide a drone 400 feet above the campus of Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC). Lankin was one of 90 visiting high school students who spent a day in hands-on, science-based workshops during Teentech 2022 hosted by Atlantic Cape Community College on May 25th. Joined by a dozen young women, including her teammates, Bianca Ruiz (ACIT) and Stephanie Mejia (Pleasantville HS), Lankin sent her drone soaring into the blue sky, following instructions given by James Taggart, Faculty Advisor in Aviation Studies at ACCC.

Lankin, who was visiting from Atlantic County Institute of Technology, in Mays Landing attended several workshops at the event, all related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The event was sponsored by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Atlantic County and Cape May Branches, Atlantic Cape Community College Foundation and funded by a grant from South Jersey Industries. Teentech is aimed at encouraging young women in grades 9-11 to further their education in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Jobs in STEM fields are among the fastest growing, and generally have higher salaries than jobs traditionally held by women.

Teentech 2022 featured a series of workshops presented by Atlantic Cape faculty, featuring studies in engineering, computer, biology, genetics, and the environment. Students chose workshops based on their interests, which included mathematical theories, drones, lab work in biology and genetics, physics, and environmental awareness. A distinguished group of professional women employed in STEM careers joined the girls for lunch to share stories of their own career paths.

The day began with a message from Keynote Speaker, Shelley Yak, Director of the William J. Hughes Technical Center, Federal Aviation Administration. A leader in her field, Yak serves as principal advisor and is responsible for managing, operating and maintaining world class aviation laboratories. Through a series of videos, Yak introduced the students to a wide variety of careers available at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey.

“We have a large STEM program at the FAA Technical Center”, said Yak. “We believe in starting young. We are vested in our youth and excited about introducing them to aviation, STEM and their future.”

AAUW NJ organizes events such as Teentech to give girls a chance to experience success in a college setting. AAUW research shows that workforce projections for 2024 confirm that the top 10 fastest-growing occupations require at least a bachelor’s degree with significant science or math training. The supply of new workers in these fields is struggling to match demand, and women remain severely underrepresented. The mission of AAUW is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy.

Linda Harmon is the AAUW New Jersey STEM Chairperson. She spoke to the young woman in attendance and shared her thoughts about pursuing well-paid careers in STEM. Said Harmon, “AAUW research shows that giving women equal opportunities to pursue — and thrive in — STEM careers helps narrow the gender pay gap and enhance women’s economic security. What’s more, greater diversity also helps to banish biases, ensure a more talented STEM workforce and lead to a fuller range of the products and services that workforce produces.”

The students were enthusiastic and engaged throughout the day. The teachers and organizers of Teentech, 2022 hope this experience will further their goals to provide opportunities to prepare young women for a future in science and mathematics.