STEM students building bridges to bright futures

U.S. Army

LOS ANGELES (Jan. 26, 2013) -- During Great Minds in STEM's Viva Technology Day at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles, Jan. 18, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick delivered last-minute instructions to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, students during the beam bridge challenge.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half of the 30 fastest-growing occupations through 2018 are STEM-related. Environmental engineers are leading the way at an expected 31 percent job growth.

"We cannot do this without great partners," said Chair and CEO of Great Minds in STEM Ray Mellado. "The Army Corps of Engineers is the largest civil engineering organization in the world. Here in Los Angeles, we have a leader who has not only embraced this problem, but he's made it a priority for him and his people. Colonel (R. Mark) Toy (Los Angeles District commander) has been a great leader and a great partner."

In his remarks, Toy said that it is no coincidence the Corps is so dedicated to STEM and under the leadership of Bostick, that passion will continue.

"My wife is the principal of an elementary school," said Bostick. "To the principals, the educators, those who enforce discipline and education, you're really what makes this all work and we're happy to be partners. Out of 100 ninth-graders, only six will go on to pursue STEM. That's our challenge. By the year 2020, we will need a million more engineers, so we have to start early."

GMiS is USACE's partner organization for STEM. Established in 1989 as HENAAC, Great Minds in STEM is a non-profit organization that focuses on STEM educational awareness programs for students from kindergarten to career, according to their charter.

"In China, they will graduate 700,000 engineers a year," said Bostick. "We do about 70,000 in America. And, many of those engineers go back to their home countries."

Bostick and Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Michael C. Wehr, and his district commanders from Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Sacramento and San Francisco, visited the school and interacted with the students.

"Dream big," said Bostick. "Our job is to mentor, to reach out to make you believe you can do anything and just reach for the stars. There is a lady, Frances Hesselbein, who earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Clinton put it around her neck in the White House. She often says that, 'there are two institutions,

that since the beginning of our country, have sustained our democracy, our freedom, and that's public education and the United States Army.'"

During Viva Technology Day, students participated in hands-on competitive, educational challenges. They worked in teams led by college students and Los Angeles district interns who major in STEM. USACE has three career internship opportunities: Pathways Internship Program for current students, Recent Graduates Program [2 years] and Presidential Management Fellows Program.

For more information, visit http://www.opm.gov/hiringreform/pathways.

Source URL (retrieved on *03/11/2014 - 5:51pm*):
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