

November 16, 2021

Inspiring the next generation of women in science

Uncategorized



On Tuesday 12th October, WAPG and education charity Ignite! hosted the fourth annual Ada Lovelace Day. The event brought together 265 students from seven Nottingham Secondary Schools and women from the WAPG collective, working in different areas of commercial science. Founded in 2009 by Suw Charman-Anderson, Ada Lovelace Day aims to increase the visibility of women in STEM, creating new role models to demonstrate the attainability of careers in STEM.

In a fitting tribute to Lovelace who is recognized as the first computer programmer, the event was, for the second year in a row, held digitally. Ada Lovelace Day 2021 began with an introductory talk by science communicator Suse Kundu. Grounded in practical, real-world advice with openness and honesty, Suse presented a wide variety of STEM-based roles, encouraging the students to explore alternative and non-linear routes to achieving their goals. Then it was on to the Invention Challenge.

Students from South Notts Academy, Nottingham Free School, Bulwell Academy, Toot Hill School, Nottingham Girls Academy, and Colonel Frank Seely Academy were tasked with creating the solutions they want to see in the world. WiFi-enabled jewellery, sustainability solutions, self-cleaning goods and tracking tech to improve safety when walking alone were among the ideas (none of which we will reveal in full – for fear of future NDAs). These inventions, like the most commercially successful, were reflections of the world and the experiences of the people behind them. And, as Janine Swarbrick, senior patent attorney at HGF who hosted the Invention Challenge noted, are ideas are not dissimilar from those currently under development with global consumer companies.

Janine, a passionate STEM ambassador continued, “Young people are great at coming up with inventions because they are so open to new ways of working with a fresh outlook on the world. Plus many of their inventions were really similar to those I handle for clients, there were lots of fantastic, well thought out ideas. It was brilliant to hear!”

While the students were busy working on their ideas, each school had the opportunity for a Q&A with the ‘scientists in residence’ and gain first-hand insights in STEM careers from women within the WAPG collective. Speaking directly with scientists from Charnwood Molecular, SPG Innovation, HGF, Cellomatics Biosciences, Excellerate Biosciences, Novosound, ScottBio, Lubrizol Advanced Materials and Lonza Solutions. From the prevalence of sexism, inclusive work cultures’ and the experience as a minority in the workforce, the students were able to ask questions in an open forum.

Megan Shore, Ignite! communications executive said “We’re so pleased to have been able to bring together women scientists and pupils from local Nottinghamshire schools once again for our Ada Lovelace Day event, which continues to provide pupils with the opportunity to ask questions to women

scientists about their jobs, their career paths and what it's like to be a woman in STEM. Reflecting on our partnership with WAPG, we're really pleased with how we've been able to build it with repeated interactions with the same schools over four years, which is not something we're always able to do when we're reliant on project-by-project funding. Students were saying that the women really opened their eyes to the breadth of jobs in science and different career routes,"

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