

Makenna Wong  
05072024

As unfortunate as it is, the divide between women and men in the workplace, especially in STEM, is prevalent and prominent. I have witnessed and experienced firsthand the prejudice against women in STEM. Through my leadership and involvement in numerous clubs, organizations, and programs, I have become an avid and active advocate for the inclusion of women in STEM and the community.

Being one of the 10% of females on the school's robotics team, I faced countless displays of microaggressions and disrespect from my male teammates and team supervisors, some denying my ability due to the sole fact I was a girl. I took this frustration and determination for better treatment and fought to gain the respect and recognition any girl deserves. Being in Cabinet for 3 years, and as the Business Vice President in my junior year and Business President in my senior year, I worked to plan and host Women in STEM events, such as a STEM speaker event where female STEM experts talked to the students at my high school about their experience, to expose my fellow female classmates to the possibilities and opportunities for women in STEM. At robotics competitions, I represented our team in Women in STEM table talks and collaboration events to advertise our team and network with our teams. I also headed our team's breast cancer awareness campaign, organizing pink ribbon-making activities to distribute around campus, hosting a pink mural signing event, and creating infographics on the team's Instagram to educate others about breast cancer. Through successful clothing drives for foster youth, fundraisers, outreach events, and performances at regional competitions, I was able to prove the importance and value of women in male-dominated fields, and act as an example for other girls wishing to join robotics.

I advocated for women empowerment through my leadership in Girl Up San Marino, a club at San Marino High School. As the Secretary, and later, Co-President, I facilitated and organized multiple community service events for the benefit of nonprofit organizations. During my term as president, we hosted a card-making event for trauma-suffering mothers at the Elizabeth House, a donation drive for unhoused families at Friends in Deed, and a bracelet-making event for families with sick children at the Ronald McDonald House. Through these service events, I was able to create an inclusive, welcoming space for female high school students to support women throughout our community.

From a Daisy to a Senior, I have thrived in the supportive and empowering environment of the Girl Scouts organization. Completing my Bronze and Silver Award, with my Gold Award still in progress, I have been busy advocating for and supporting women all around my community. At Friends in Deed, a nonprofit organization providing food and shelter for unhoused persons, I have assisted in the renovation of their Women's Room, a sleeping room for women to sleep, eat, and take a shower. I also assembled hundreds of care packages full of female hygiene products for unhoused women in the greater Pasadena area. Finally, I spread positivity and mental health awareness through my artwork, which I distributed to visitors of Friends in Deed. My work in Girl Scouts allowed me to share the importance of ready-available female hygiene products, provide assistance for unhoused women, and promote mental health awareness.

The inclusion of women in STEM and advocacy for the wellbeing and support of women are causes I wholeheartedly believe in, and I hope to continue this passion in my work at college and further.