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Changing the Lives of Students...*One Squad at a Time!*

## Spring 2015

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### About This Newsletter

You will learn how MSCA helps increase the diversity of our future California workforce by preparing girls and underrepresented minority students to build STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) skills.

## Welcome from Our Program Director



Welcome to the MOUSE Squad Student Tech Leadership spring 2015 issue!

This issue is dedicated to how we connect youth to STEM career pathways. Throughout California, MSCA is changing the face of technology learning and leading the way in teaching 21st century workforce skills. Here are just a few examples:

- Our middle and high schools in **Orange Unified School District** participate in career tech ed activities such as Java programming, designing web sites and hardware component review.
- In **Los Angeles Unified School District** students at elementary and middle schools engage in activities that support the library, printers, and webcasts; they also participate in tech support teams, service learning projects, and partner with University of Southern CA (USC) and other community organizations.
- In Contra Costa County, **Mt. Diablo Unified School District** students provide technical support to teachers including setting up computer labs, refreshing computers, and troubleshooting hardware and software issues.

These are just a few examples of how MSCA schools in California are connecting students to their future. We invite you to partner with MSCA, <http://www.mousesquadca.org>.

## Cisco: STEM Corporate Partner of the Month

Part of MOUSE Squad's mission is to expose youth to STEM careers and prepare them for the workforce. Recently two San Jose elementary schools spent an afternoon at Cisco's Compliance Engineer Lab. The 4th and 5th grade MOUSE students from Horace



Cureton and LUCHA Elementary were able to visit the EMC test chambers, safety test lab, earthquake and transportation shock and vibration testing lab, as well as the temperature and humidity test chambers.

One of the most popular aspects was a packaging drop test—a traditional egg drop activity with a green design twist. Students used materials to design a package that kept the egg intact when dropped from a specific height.

The goal was to save the egg while using the least amount of packaging and the highest percentage of eco-friendly materials. According to one of the teachers, Gloria Hayes-Perkins, “The kids loved the egg drop. They were able to work collaboratively and experience eco-friendly design in a hands-on context. It was science in action.”

The field trip is an example of MOUSE Squad mission in action. According to Jonathan Natividad, LUCHA teacher, “I’m always talking with the kids about how life is about opportunities and learning. You need to get out there and pursue your future. It’s so important for them to see how teamwork and communication are vital pieces of life and work.”

Similarly, Ms. Hayes-Perkins said, “this gets the students out of their five mile radius. They were able to meet people who educated and exposed them to different environments and career opportunities. At the end of the day, some of the youth said I want to work with Cisco!”

If your company is interested in hosting a field trip for local youth, please contact Andrea Jones, Program Manager, [andrea@mousesquadca.org](mailto:andrea@mousesquadca.org).

## Encouraging Girls to Become STEM Majors

Garima Lunawat and Sabrina Noritake (below, left to right) are typical college freshmen— living in the dorms, making friends and loving their new found independence. What sets them apart is their choice of majors. Garima is a Computer Science major and Sabrina is Pre-pharmacy/Biology. Although women make up approximately 58% of college graduates, only 17% pursue STEM majors, with particularly low rates of engineering, physics and computer science degrees. Since 1986, the rate of women earning computer science degrees has dropped from 37% to 12%. (The National Center for Women and Information Technology 2012).

Given the vast growth in STEM employment—today, and in the years to come—how do we encourage girls to pursue these fields? For Garima and Sabrina, their middle school MOUSE Squad experience was instrumental. When asked why she got involved in MOUSE, Sabrina says, “When I learned it was hands-on computers and there were other girls in the class, I got excited. It’s important to have other girls in the class, even if it’s just one other girl.”

There are key tenets to encouraging girls in STEM. Projects need to be collaborative, open-ended and personally meaningful. One of the central findings in STEM research is



how important role models and mentors are to young girls (SciGirls Seven: How to Engage Girls in STEM).

Garima's personal experience echoes this research, "finding role models is essential. There are not a lot of female role models. Girls are asking, where can I see the people I want to become? For me, it was really exposure at an early age and I was also lucky enough to have an older friend who pursued mechanical engineering. She was instrumental in encouraging me to pursue computer science!"

Garima and Sabrina are now encouraging other young people to pursue STEM careers. In January 2015 they returned to their former middle school in Silicon Valley to speak to current MOUSE Squad students. When asked why it's important for them to go back, Sabrina answers, "we want to be those role models for young people, especially the girls! Our experience in MOUSE Squad was the entry point for our decisions." Garima adds, "I want to show other girls they can do this. I hope seeing me will show them what they're capable of accomplishing."

## Corporate Volunteer Spotlight: Franklin Templeton Investments



Franklin Templeton Investments headquartered in San Mateo, California places an emphasis on supporting the community. George Hall Elementary, located just a half mile from FTI's San Mateo campus is a great example of a private/public school partnership. FTI supports the school with a variety of services including a mentoring program and coordinator for MOUSE Squad. MOUSE Squad Program Manager, Andrea Jones talks with Coordinator's Tom Deane

and Charles Shanefelter about their experiences volunteering with MOUSE Squad.

**Tom and Charles, can you tell me why you make time for this every week?**

*Charles:* I grew up in a poor family and had lots of people to help me out so it's important for me to give back. The company culture at FTI encourages employees to volunteer. I would not be volunteering if it wasn't for FTI.

*Tom:* It's really rewarding to see the excitement of kids learning about technology. They literally run to the lab. If the lab is closed, they're breaking down the door.

*Charles:* These kids are giving up their lunchtime/recess to be there—that's a big deal!

**What is the best part of working with the kids?**

*Tom:* Seeing their eagerness to learn. They want to help the school fix computers, they want to build video games, they want to code, they want to learn so much.

**What changes do you see in the youth as they go through the program?**

*Tom:* We have had some students who are struggling academically; but we see something in them and give them a chance to be in the squad, grow and develop, and become leaders. One young lady started out very shy, insecure, not confident. She has grown so much and now she's a leader in the squad — working in classrooms and helping coordinate the squad's classroom maintenance visits.

**What changes have you seen in yourself?**

*Charles:* I've noticed that I need to stop, slow down.

*Tom:* Volunteering with MOUSE Squad has helped develop my confidence as a leader. I have learned a lot about leading, planning and teaching.

**If you were recruiting someone to volunteer in MOUSE Squad, what would you tell them?**

*Charles:* Just do it! I was reserved about doing this because I wasn't sure my knowledge was adequate. You can make that time; you're not as busy as you think you are.

*Tom:* It's an exciting opportunity to help the next generation of kids learn about technology. We don't know what their jobs are going to look like, but we can help prepare them for what their world is going to be.

## Donor Spotlight: Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you to [all of the supporters](#) of our year end appeal! With your support, we can continue building and growing our squads across California. There's still time to become a supporter; [click here](#) and learn how you can help transform the lives of our students.

## About MOUSE Squad of California

MSCA is the Student Tech Leadership program of Aspiranet, a CA nonprofit that provides after-school and youth development programs, and children and family services. MSCA is a licensed partner of MOUSE, a New York City-based nonprofit.

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