

# Success in STEM: Alumna rises to the top of her field

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Diane Howard has a longstanding love for math and science, one that led to a successful career in the engineering field.

You can call it a family tradition of sorts. Her father, John Ozovek, went to college on the G.I. Bill and worked for General Electric in a technical job. As a firm believer in education, perhaps it's not surprising that his children followed suit.

Diane, twin sister Debra Perkins and older brother Jerry Ozovek all graduated from SUNY Broome – then called Broome Community College – with engineering degrees, finishing their bachelor's at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and their master's at Syracuse University.

"We all had an aptitude for (math and science)," remembered Howard, now Vice President of Operations for Northrop Grumman's Cyber Division just outside Washington, D.C. With five kids in the family, it wasn't easy to afford an education. BCC saved the day."

A graduate of Binghamton Central High School, Howard worked her way through the ranks quickly. After graduating from RPI, she worked in computer engineering for IBM at Glendale. After a series of engineer positions, she moved into management at the age of 24, spending 10 years in engineering for process development.

"It was great, being the engineer and learning management and leadership skills early on. I had a lot of Ph.D.s working for me and we did a lot of fun things," she said.

After a decade at Glendale, she moved down to IBM Owego – now Lockheed Martin – to work with programs for government customers. In 2001, she transferred to a director position at Lockheed Martin in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Remaining in the defense industry, she was then recruited as vice president of radio communications for Thales Communications and then by Northrop Grumman, where she remains today.

As Vice President of Operations for the Cyber Division, she deals with tactical communications known as C4ISR, short for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.

Now three decades into her career, Howard is surprised by the low numbers of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). STEM careers can be highly rewarding, and degrees in the field can open

doors in many areas.

“I always tell young women and young men, if you get a degree in engineering, that’s just a springboard to do so many things. I’m really passionate about it. It’s a great foundation to have,” she said. Opportunities needn’t be solely technical in nature, either, and can include business, law school and even medicine, she added.

Fostering interest in STEM fields – particularly for under-represented populations – needs to start early in both the home and school. With that in mind, companies such as Northrup Grumman work with local schools and universities to show what’s possible and encourage students interested in STEM careers. Howard herself enjoys speaking with women interested in STEM

Howard also participates in outreach, and spoke at Syracuse University in 2013 on Engineering Meets Business 101.

“The secret of my success? Some of it was not thinking that no, or not doing it, was an option,” she reflected. “The gender doesn’t matter. You do the best you can and just charge the hill. I raised my hand and did the hard assignments.”

Howard remembers long nights of study in the library, alongside her sister and other engineering students. She was grateful for the challenge, which more than prepared her – and her engineering peers – for their future degrees and careers.

“The professors at Broome were by far the best in terms of caring for students, the accessibility, making things fun,” she said.

To continue the Hornet tradition, her late parents have left an endowment to the college: the John and Marie Ozovek Scholarship.

“We’ve been a Broome family,” Howard said. “We’re all advocates for STEM.”

**Diane Howard**

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