

Lunch and Launch with Judith Kersey

Space travel, the final frontier for man. In this case man means human. However, some people think that space travel is a male job only. There is no gender defined role for space travel. Great women have launched from the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or S.T.E.M. to outer space. Women like Ms. Judith Kersey whose approach to engineering and women in “male jobs” inspired thousands to excel in S.T.E.M fields. A lunch meeting with Ms. Kersey would add tremendous value to anyone who aspires to one day launch in space.

To begin with, Ms. Kersey was a N.A.S.A. Engineer and was the first female guidance engineer during the days of the Apollo and Saturn missions. During simulation launch of the Saturn Ms. Kersey pointed out an error which was ignored by the male officer who saw her as a novice female engineer. The test launch ended up failing an hour later, giving validity to Ms. Kersey’s expertise and input. Her contribution to those missions, lead to a promotion to Senior Manager and later to the Systems Assurance Office following the space shuttle Challenger incident. Her actions demonstrated that we rise as a team when everyone’s voice is valued.

Ms. Kersey is a big advocate for women in engineering. While attending the University of Florida she directed the *Florida State Symposium for Women in Engineering and Science* which became the *Florida Section of the Society of Women Engineers*. In the Society of Women Engineers, she currently mentors and develops the skills of women who aspire to becoming engineers and scientists. She also chairs the Introducing Girls to Engineering Workshop, an event that has impacted over 1,800 girls in the first four years. This reflects her influence to get women involved in S.T.E.M fields and ultimately roles in engineering. Ms. Kersey aptly states,

“everyone at the Space Center should be encouraging their daughters, granddaughters and their neighbors that they can be anything they want to be and engineering is a choice for them, too”

Ms. Judith Kersey is an inspirational figure in women’s technology. She has contributed to removing barriers for women in S.T.E.M. We could all benefit from a lunch and learn with her. Her astuteness, intelligence and advocacy for women in S.T.E.M fields could provide the path to launching careers in engineering and outer space. From the voice that was not valued to the voice that now adds value to women, Judith Kersey is a women of significance.