

## The STEAM City of Women – Week 3

Sofia, *student*

### Monday 7/26

Guess what... It's already Week 3! I hope you had a good night's sleep and are fully awake, because this morning we began with Angela Santillo, who taught us about Story Writing. As you may have figured, I love to write. Starting off the week with this workshop was energizing to say the least. Well, why exactly is storytelling important? All of our lives, experiences, and memories are stories. Storytelling is a way of connecting people and communicating, which dates back to the beginning of mankind. After an amazing introduction, Angela taught us about Dramatic Storytelling through the example of the Wizard of Oz. Personally, the Lion was always my favorite character in the story. We learned about how stories are formatted: the main character, action (or tornado), the obstacle, conflict, and finally, the ending. After we fully understood what makes a story actually a story, we brainstormed about different stories to categorize as tragic or comedic. For example, Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy. I had so much fun with Angela, she is so charismatic, even at 10 am! Next, Lianne took over for the second workshop. She taught us about Quipu before guiding us through a new project. What exactly is Quipu? Quipu are knotted string devices used for record keeping and communication by the Inca empire. As you may know, the Inca empire stretched from Ecuador all the way to Argentina between 1400 and 1532. South American empires are one of my favorite topics in world history as my heritage is Colombian. I had never heard of Quipu before today. We watched some videos on how to tie the different knots on the strings and what they mean. Then, it was time! We got to design our own butterflies out of coffee filters. I decorated mine with leaves and flowers out of different color markers. Everyone's designs were unique and beautiful. Our group is always so creative. Next, we added the strings to the butterfly and began adding knots like in traditional Quipu. Though it was a little tricky at first, I got the hang of it after a couple tries. I can't wait to see everyone's finished products when the postcards are made!

### Tuesday 7/27

It's traveling Tuesday! This morning we virtually crossed borders and landed in Egypt. We had the pleasure of visiting the US Agency for International Development (USAID). We were joined by 5 members of the team: Leslie Reed, Salwa Tobbala, Alina Menicucci, Jason Taylor, and Kathleen Kirsch. First we learned about the academic backgrounds of the panel and how their interests have changed. They gave us some valuable advice: it is important to try things outside of your comfort zone. It's okay to not know what you want to study in college and do beyond that in adulthood, there is still time and experiences to be learned from. They gave us insight into their lives during college, professional experience, and thoughts. Since many of the participants of this program are young, it was refreshing and reassuring to hear such meaningful advice from these intellectuals. We were taught the importance of internships! Internships are the best way to really understand a career or aspiration. You never know, maybe after doing an internship, you may want to change your path. Life is about new experiences and taking on challenges, so never be afraid of stepping away from what you thought you wanted. Things don't always go your way and it's important to set priorities.

Sometimes, even the opportunities or jobs we are most excited about are not what they seem, but there is always a valuable lesson to be taken away from every experience. Since all these individuals are highly sophisticated, Dr. C threw in an exciting question: What would your role be on Mars if you were invited by EDsnaps to join our team? Each one of them had very passionate answers, showing their natural callings to be leaders and team players. I enjoyed how they took such an open-ended question and demonstrated their favorite qualities through their hypothetical jobs on Mars.

### Wednesday 7/28

Is it already Wednesday? This week feels like it's flying by. Anyways, this morning we had a special zoom call with Tamara Morgan, the community partnerships coordinator for Adaptive Design. We were also joined by 2 more members of her team, Adam El-Sawaf and Michelle D'Mello and then we started with the virtual tour! It's such a creative space: there's a sample area, staff recognition wall, picture of past projects, and activity cards. Upstairs is the workshop, where everything gets created; they use cardboard instead of wood or plastic. Triwall cardboard is much more structural than regular so it can take on more "wear and tear", as Adam explained, than other cardboards. We saw an example of a project, an adaptive chair designed specifically for a little girl. It has wheels to transport her when needed, is easy to use in a classroom, is safe and secure, and is also super colorful and cute! In another project, for a boy this time, we saw a chair that was adapted to include arm rests. The piece can be removed and placed on different chairs, so the boy can have a variety of ways to sit comfortably. Unlike the other chair, which had a unicorn, this chair had a train. We saw so many more unique designs, made practical for the needs and likings of each child. Not all designs are made from cardboard, as one adaptation was made for the wheelchair of a couple expecting a child. The minds of the members of this team are truly incredible. Not only are they engineers, they are also passionate and caring people who understand the difficulties some individuals face because of their disabilities. Next, Adam thoroughly explained basic switches and circuits to us. We also learned about battery interrupters, which redirect current from the power source, or battery, to a jack. Jacks are used to add an existing switch to a circuit. Then it was time for a hands-on project! Adam led us through a simple and fun way to make our own circuits at home, with the supplies Dr. C sent us before the program began. I had a lot of fun making my own LED light up! This was definitely a very new experience for me, as it possibly was for other participants of our program as well. What a great way to start off my Wednesday. What will the rest of the week look like for us?

### Thursday 7/29

Happy Thursday everyone! Today, our first guest was Cindy Montgenie who is a Future of Work expert, which means she prepares leaders to be ready to work in the best ways possible not only in reference to performance but also to wellbeing. Who would have guessed that this public speaker is an introvert! Cindy has a passion for teaching and sharing what she knows to help others. Although this is not what she thought she would ever do, it is her calling to contribute to others. Her advice to us was to not stress ourselves, because our world is changing rapidly and new jobs are always emerging. However, use your talents and gifts to explore and venture into the world of knowledge. She gave a personal example to show that

there is always a bigger picture and everything is a learning experience. Cindy told us that the most important qualities are confidence and communication. Communication is the basis of all good relationships, interactions, and progress. Put yourself out there! You need to be able to be outside of your comfort zone and work towards success, even if you are afraid. You'll never guess what she said next: it's okay to be nervous, it's normal. Even she has nerves when she's presenting. One time, a coach she had an interview with was unable to understand her because of her accent (which I think is very nice). She felt self-conscious about it, but realized she needed to keep working on her confidence and excel even though this coach completely discouraged her. Priorities are key because you never know when your circumstances will change and you might have to change your financial habits. Lastly, the most important piece of advice Cindy gave us was to follow your dreams. No one can stop you from what you love. For the second half of today's meeting, Renata Townsend and Olney Edmonson from New Victory Dance came to visit! This was a very fun morning, not only did we get excellent advice, we got to dance again! After some warmup and the EDsnaps dance, we watched out for shapes in a spectacular video performance by members of the dance company. We took the shapes we saw and created our own 4 shape dance pieces. Even though I did not share mine, I had a lot of fun experimenting with different movements and styles. Some of our participants and counselors are so brave, they shared their masterpieces with everyone. Even Dr. C shared today! Hats off to all of you. Can't wait to have Renata and Olney back next week, they truly know how to get us into artistic mind spaces.

### Friday 7/30

Chirpy Friday! Today, not only was Maura, one of our students, an interviewer, but we also had Shweta Patira as our first guest speaker. Maura had a beautiful background; the trees were as green as ever and the birds were chirping away. Shweta grew up in India, moved to the Middle East, then to where she is now, in New York City. Growing up, her role models were Neil Armstrong and her mom. Even though she always wanted to be an artist, she was always told "Doctor, Engineer, or a Failure", which was very hard for her to shake off. Shweta is so strong and perseverant. She has always been very ambitious, a quality that pushed her beyond the boundaries she grew up around and found what she loves. In the future, she has aspirations to start her own business making shoes. She describes that there are a lot of problems with women's high heel shoes, and she hopes to bring change. It is very evident that Shweta has always been very creative. At Microsoft, she was an engineer. We saw many of the devices and holograms she worked on that saved lives. It was truly amazing. In her current job, she is a senior manager at LinkedIn. Shweta and her teams work on reactions, features, and other components that go into LinkedIn's elite platform. Shweta asserts that she is introspective, as she cares about others, how to help them, and work towards improvement as a team. Being in a senior manager position, being willing to act for the benefit of the whole team and having a great Emotional Intelligence (EI) is often times much more important than having a high Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Never settle for less! Aim for more! This is fantastic advice. Shweta says she has changed jobs a few times during her professional career (for example Microsoft and HBO), but that has never been a downside. In fact, it has increased her curiosity for the unknown and new experiences. Thank you Shweta for an amazing interview! For the second half of today's meeting, we worked on our Flower Power project as teams. We talked about

how many zinnias we have, their sizes, locations, and more. One of my flowers is 11.5 cm tall! We also shared our ideas on what we would like our posters to include later on. Then we went back to our large group and shared our findings and questions. Lastly, we said goodbye to Lisanne van Engelen, our co-host and counselor, who got a job! We are all so proud of her and will miss seeing her every morning. Best of luck to Lisanne, because with no doubt, she will succeed. See you all next week! Bye now.