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WHAT'S WORKING

INSPIRE YOUNG GIRLS AND HARNESS CLIENTS

Nitsch Engineering (Boston, MA), a 60-person, consulting engineering and land surveying firm, has capitalized on a national initiative not only by introducing girls to engineering, but by also partnering with clients and engaging its staff with the public.

Running for the eighth consecutive year, "Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day"—a national program of the National Society of Professional Engineers (Alexandria, VA)—has allowed, for example, 100 girls aspiring to one day become engineers to get a personal, guided tour of Boston's Tobin Bridge, and visit Boston University. Nitsch Engineering worked with their clients at the university, HDR, MassHighway, Massport, and the Executive Office of Transportation to put on this year's event.

"I look at it as a marketing opportunity in one way and an outreach opportunity in another way," says firm President Judith Nitsch. "Clients are invited to bring their daughters and nieces to the event, which reinforces relationships."

In a profession where "engineer" and "woman" is not the first thing that jumps to mind, women-owned Nitsch Engineering sees its role as an essential one.

"Engineering has not reached the parity that architecture, law, other professions have reached with women," Nitsch says, adding that only 10% of practicing civil engineers are women.



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Stories of success around the initiative abound.

For example, a young woman who recently graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in mechanical engineering attended the event at Logan International Airport five years ago, when Nitsch Engineering partnered with Massport's women engineers.

"We had one 10th grade girl this year, who has attended for five years," Nitsch says. "Guaranteed, she's going to be an engineer."

Besides the opportunity to engage and partner with clients, the initiative also allows the firm's young female engineers to develop project management and interpersonal skills, Nitsch says.

Young engineers participate in panel discussions and are drafted to serve as project managers for the initiative.

"I wouldn't categorize myself as a cubicle engineer," says Erin Joyce, PE, who was project manager for this year's event, but the event served as an opportunity to "interact at a non-project level" with clients. **E**

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