

Olympia LePoint: A most promising engineer



Olympia LePoint of Integrated Defense Systems has been named a Modern Day Technology Leader, as part of the 2003 Black Engineer of the Year Awards.

By Mick Boroughs

Editor's note: Four Boeing employees will be honored at the 17th annual Black Engineer of the Year Awards Conference this weekend in Baltimore. To commemorate their achievements, Boeing News Now this week is featuring profiles of the Boeing recipients.

Olympia LePoint is still surprised at being named a Modern Day Technology Leader and most promising engineer finalist as part of the 2003 Black Engineer of the Year Awards.

The 26-year-old systems safety and reliability engineer with Integrated Defense Systems at Canoga Park, Calif., has made an indelible impression on her teammates. Instead of looking at life as a series of obstacles and hurdles, LePoint sees challenges and opportunities.

So many times within a large company, it is easy to not notice people, LePoint said. I now realize that people are watching and appreciative of new ideas and thought.

LePoint has a bachelor s degree in mathematics from California State University, Northridge, where she also is finishing her master s degree in applied math. Soon she will begin work on her doctorate in statistics at UCLA.

At Boeing now for five years, LePoint performs reliability calculations and serves as an internal consultant on engine testing and as one of two statisticians at her site.

There are definitely times where I think that there is so much that I don t know and that I need to find out, she said, but at Boeing, I have the opportunity to do what I was trained to do.

In 1999, LePoint received a Boeing Company Growth and Innovation Award, in 2002, a Boeing Company Technical Excellence Award, and in 2001, a Engineers Council Distinguished Engineering Project Achievement Award for Propulsion Systems Design for Reliability.

LePoint credits the support and encouragement of her mother, Pamela LePoint, in directing her toward engineering. Her mother will attend the award ceremonies in Baltimore this week as her guest.

She suggested I go into mathematics in the 11th grade. She told me I had a talent for it, LePoint recalled. When I got to college, I realized that I not only understood the information faster than others, but I could explain it. Math is one of those fundamental tools that is embedded in engineering and science.

Today, LePoint is a mentor to many high school students in the Canoga Park area as she instructs weekend workshops in trigonometry and calculus to prepare them for college. LePoint also is involved in the DiscoverE Program in her northern Los Angeles area. She speaks with elementary, middle school and high school students about the importance of math and science and what they need to do to prepare for a career in those fields.

I feel every one of those students deserves to be in a university by working hard and earning their space, she said.

Boeing has its challenges and opportunities ahead to become more diversified, LePoint noted.

The fact that a young, black female is being recognized in a predominately different environment is a lot to think about. I think this is just one step more in understanding the diverse workforce that can enhance the company as a whole, she said.

Unfortunately, cultural biases can compromise the technical information and hinder ways of successful business, she added. As a result, we can t put enough emphasis on diversity. It s really important for me to open people's eyes for those whose eyes are closed because there s a lot to see once you see it.

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