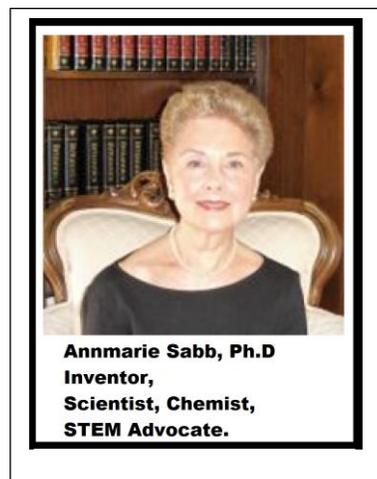


Introducing Annmarie Saab PhD, Chemist, Inventor and a STEM advocate.

As discussed with Kamana Misra PhD, Founding Editor AWISNJ Articles

- In your professional life, being a female has been an advantage or a disadvantage?

As I sought employment following graduation from Douglass College in 1964 there was only one employer, Union Carbide, where I was asked “When are you planning to get married and how many children are you going to have?” I was wearing an engagement ring. However, this question never came up at American Cyanamid. I took that position as a chemist in the Dyes Division in Bound Brook, N.J. When I eventually moved to Baltimore, Md. with my husband, who was in law school, I worked for FMC Corp. doing prior art literature searches and patent searches at the US Patent Office. Returning to New Jersey in 1968, I was rehired by American Cyanamid in Bound Brook and transferred to their Agricultural Division in Princeton when their Bound Brook Division closed. In 1986, as a graduate of Princeton University with a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry, being a female was an advantage in obtaining a job in Drug Discovery Research at Ayerst Research in Princeton. I remained at Ayerst through many mergers and acquisitions. The Company became known as Wyeth and our Division’s focus was Neuroscience Research. Wyeth was purchased by Pfizer in 2009.



- There is fortunately a lot of focus currently on a more inclusive STEM & Entrepreneurship landscape. Despite all the work being done, the world economic forum 2016 global gender gap report predicts it will take approximately 150 years to achieve gender equity in America. Do you think we can accelerate this process? Is sufficient impactful work being done?

It has been said that you get what you expect. If you have high expectations for women and girls from a very early age they will have the self confidence they need to succeed in STEM. Ideally these high expectations should start at home and be reinforced in our school systems starting with elementary school. STEM needs to be presented in its many applications which children can understand. Math needs to be taught as concepts not rote memorization of mathematical rules. Those that excel in math understand the concept behind the rules. Students get excited or turned off to STEM early. Supporting elementary and high school teachers is a way for those of us in STEM to help to address the equity hurdle.

- What has been the role of mentoring in your professional life? Have females helped you more than males?

Because I began my career in 1964, my mentors have always been males. In my first job my supervisor asked me to give our group’s report to upper management. I was the only woman in the room. In 1986 when I was hired as a Research Scientist at Ayerst, I was the only woman Ph.D. in the Medicinal Chemistry Drug Discovery Research Department. As I became involved in the hiring process for our Department, I was the one in the mentoring role as we began to add women to our staff at the Ph.D. level. There were women at the BS/MS level earlier

- Any message to the next generation of STEM professionals and the audience

Find an area of your expertise that excites you and inspires you to make an impact or to discover a new and better way of doing things. This passion will drive you and help you to reach your goals. Networking is very important and any mechanism which provides that to women in STEM is a worthwhile endeavor. Self-confidence is the key to success in STEM. This area is difficult and success in this area takes persistence. Support and advice from other women who have found a way to navigate their profession will help women to reach their goals.