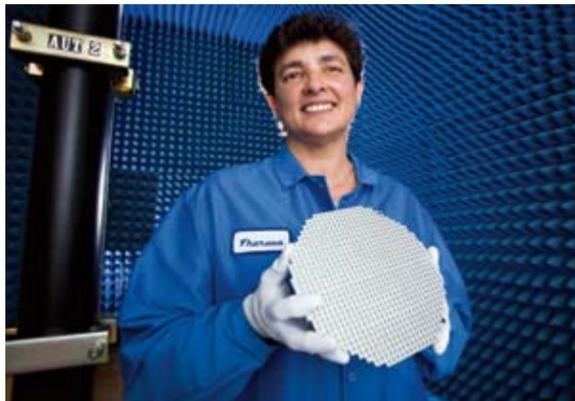


Top Stories

[Sign up](#) for the A-List Gwinnett newsletter to stay up to date on all the latest in Gwinnett.

- Top Stories**
- Business Briefs**
- Success Stories**
- Growing Gwinnett**
- Real Estate**
- Rainmaking**
- Ideas at Work**
- Operations**
- Legal Matters**
- People Power**
- Finance & Capital**
- Work/Life**
- Events**
- Archive**
- Search this site**



Special Focus: Women in Business

Top EMS space engineer encourages girls to pursue the sciences

*November 2008
by Joel Furfari*

There aren't a lot of female engineers, let alone ones that specialize in building microwave communications equipment for NASA and the defense industry. Only 10 percent of engineers are women and in some specialties, that rate is even lower.

"I'm around men all the time," Theresa Brunasso says with a laugh. "I think that's what motivated me to encourage young girls to go into engineering."

[Story continues below](#)

Brunasso is a principal engineer and the director of technology development for defense and space systems at Norcross-based EMS Technologies. As a top expert in satellite communications, she's also on a mission to increase the ranks of women in engineering professions.

In September, Brunasso was one of three women honored by Women in Technology, a Georgia-based group, as a winner of the ninth annual Women of the Year in Technology Award.

Her community work has included serving as an EMS volunteer for Junior Achievement's Whole School Program; volunteering in IEEE's Atlanta section; and working with girls and young women through MentorNet, a non-profit e-mentoring network for diversity in engineering and science, and through Georgia Tech's Futurescape Program, a National Science Foundation-funded program to attract young women in technical fields. In the Futurescape program alone, Brunasso has reached more than 600 students over more than a decade of involvement.

The main goal, she says, is to help girls see beyond the stereotype that "girls aren't good at math and science."

"I have several ideas about that," Brunasso says. "First of all, they have to see women who are in the career. When I was younger, I thought women had to be secretaries, teachers and nurses. Also, you have to emphasize the creativity in the field, even though we don't usually think about engineering that way."

She points out that research has shown girls are just as likely to pursue engineering careers if they're encouraged.

"For me it helped that my father was engineer, but I don't think it should have to be that way,"

Survey

What is the biggest single issue facing Gwinnett's business community?

- Traffic congestion
- Access to capital
- Government regulation
- Workforce training and education

Submit

GBJ Flip Book

[GTC International Education Center](#)

Ribbon-Cutting



Links You Can Use

Some links related to the article or topic of this page...

- [Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Gwinnett Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Georgia Chamber of Commerce](#)

Brunasso says.

Lynn Fountain, former director of Georgia Tech's Futurescape Program, and currently a principal research scientist at Signature Technology Labs in Georgia Tech Research Institute, says Brunasso has often spoken to groups of 20 girls at a time about what technology careers can offer women.

"Theresa did a great job in terms of talking both about the technology and the challenges in her career and profession," Fountain says. "She also balanced it with what her personal life was like so that she was giving the young girls a well-rounded sense of what it meant to be a woman in technology."

Brunasso is currently involved in developing communications systems for a major NASA mission to research Mars. For someone whose specialty is in designing and implementing complex microwave equipment, this is the pinnacle. Brunasso says she wants future generations to have even more opportunities like that.

"I think the message we communicate to young women is that they can't succeed in engineering," she says. "It's important that we change the message we send to girls."

