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[Virtual Event Fosters Community, Connection, and Celebration of Women in STEM](#)

[Kristine Horvat, Ph.D., the first member of her family to pursue a career in the STEM field](#)

[MAY 5, 2021](#)

[By Renee Chmiel, Office of Marketing and Communications](#)

[Kristine Horvat, Ph.D.](#)

[When Malaika Matumbu '22 was growing up in an industrial neighborhood in the Democr](#)

[Matumbu's father did everything from helping to design and build the family's house to r](#)

[Passionate about chemistry, math, economics, physics, and coding, Matumbu wanted to](#)

["I knew that I would academically be challenged, and I would gain knowledge and unders](#)

[Matumbu was among those who attended a recent event, titled "Girl Power in STEM: Cho](#)

["Events like this are important because they provide opportunities for women at every le](#)

["The first person from my family to pursue a career in STEM"](#)

["Girl Power in STEM: Choose to Challenge!" enabled women in science, technology, engin](#)

One of Matumbu's professors, Kristine Horvat, Ph.D., an assistant professor of chemical engineering, was a speaker at the event.

Held for the seventh time this year, Girl Power in STEM was created as a celebration of women in STEM fields.

"Every year it is very rewarding to hear from speakers, panelists, and audience members," said Kristine Horvat. "I was reminded of the amazing things we can achieve."

Typically geared toward high school students, the symposium was held virtually this year.

The U.S. Department of Energy promoted the event on its website and social media accounts.

Held on International Women's Day, a global holiday celebrated every March to commemorate the achievements of women.

"I think it is important to recognize a need to promote equal rights and opportunities for women in STEM fields," said Kristine Horvat.

For Matumbu, the chemical engineering major, the event was a particularly meaningful one.

"I was honored to be among so many women who were celebrating each other's accomplishments," she said.

"I was truly empowered by the speakers, panelists, and other women I interacted with," she said.

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