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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAN WE INSPIRE MORE WOMEN ENGINEERS? YES, WE CAN!

As part of the national effort to reach K-12 girls with positive messages about math and science and motivate more women into engineering careers, the Maui Economic Development Board's Women in Technology (WIT) Project, has again teamed up with a number of local organizations to promote "Introduce A Girl to Engineering Day" (IGED).

Now in its ninth year, Maui's 2009 IGED event will be held on Thursday, February 19, in conjunction with National Engineers Week. Middle school girls will have the exciting opportunity to job shadow local public and private sector engineers to learn how engineers contribute to our island community.

This event is especially relevant because women are still severely underrepresented in the engineering profession. Currently, only 20% of engineering undergraduates are women. Of the nation's engineering workforce, only 10% are women. In Hawaii, women engineers represent a mere 5% of the workforce.

In order to change these numbers, studies suggest that girls need to be encouraged in the math and science fields before high school, when they have time to cultivate their STEM interests and take the necessary steps to prepare for 21st century technology careers.

Job shadowing and mentoring are proven ways to positively impact a young person's career choices. By the end of February, more than a million girls nationwide will receive a firsthand introduction to engineering, along with a clearer idea of its importance in society.

WIT will be accepting a total of 30 participants for the IGED event, open to Maui County middle school females currently in 7th and 8th grade. The schedule will include onsite job shadowing at various participating companies, as well as a luncheon for students, chaperones, and volunteer engineers.

Here are some comments from past participants:

- "I really liked meeting girls my age and finding common interests in engineering."
~ Kiana (Lahaina)
- "...what surprised me most was that engineers mean so much to the society. I didn't know that engineers did so much. (This experience) has made me want to do it (engineering as a career choice) more! ~ Anna G. (Lokelani)
- "I enjoyed going to different places with my engineer to get a better picture of what she does. (This event) has really impacted my desire to pursue engineering

because it showed me how much cool things engineers do and how they help make a difference." ~ Brytne O. (Kalama)

For more information about IGED, please visit www.womenintech.com or contact Jenilynne Salvador at jeni@medb.org, (808) 875-2332.

The Maui event is made possible through MEDB's Women in Technology Project, in partnership with the Maui Chapter of the Hawaii Society of Professional Engineers and the County of Maui. Funding for this local program is provided by the County of Maui and the Air Force Research Laboratory.

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