

Op-Ed

# How My Journey in STEM Began

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Finding a connection between your unique self and what you can offer your community can lead to a rewarding career. I discovered I was driven to understand how things worked, which made me the curious student in class who was frequently asking questions.

Through Sonora Quest's collaboration with SARSEF, I now know the importance of sharing my journey in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to encourage future students who share in my curiosity and want to join the STEM journey!

I am originally from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. We moved and I grew up in the Foothills of North Carolina (GO Tarheels!) in a single-parent home. My mom worked full-time as well as two other part-time jobs while providing for my younger brother and me.

In middle school, I remember being intrigued by the stepped approach to arriving at a scientific conclusion: observation, question, hypothesis, prediction, test, analysis, and iteration. Even though my mother's background was not in STEM, she helped cultivate my enthusiasm for science. I remember she always took a genuine interest in my homework and experiments. If I failed, she encouraged me to try again. She believed in me and my ability to figure things out. My mother motivated me with her interests in my studies, which inspired me to explore more and focus on my future in STEM.

My freshman year I majored in Biology at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Along the way, I learned about a career path in Nuclear Medicine Technology, a science field that uses radiopharmaceuticals to evaluate organ function and structure. In 2009, I graduated from Manhattan College with a BS in Radiological and Health Sciences with a major in Nuclear Medicine Technology and Concentration in Health Administration. With my degree, I became a Nuclear Medicine PET/CT Technologist serving on the frontlines of healthcare in New York's Upper East Side at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. There I experienced first-hand how delicate life is and learned the importance of providing exceptional patient care.

Over time I developed an interest in combining data with healthcare to contribute to improving quality care outcomes, which motivated me to obtain my MBA in Managerial Analytics from Mercy College. After graduation, my husband and I moved to Arizona, and I pursued a career at Sonora Quest Laboratories/Laboratory Sciences of Arizona (SQL/LSA)—one of the largest laboratory networks in the nation—as a Clinical Informatics Specialist.

I am proud to be a part of a company that brings such valuable and critical services to the community and humbled by the diligence and hard work the team demonstrates every day. Our President & CEO Dave Dexter says that the lab is at the epicenter of healthcare, and I've seen it firsthand. Our work makes a significant difference in people's lives.

I know I am a valued member of the SQL/LSA family. I am extremely grateful for all the creative experiences I have been a part of over the last four years and the support of my leaders along the way. I have led projects for the Population Health and Innovation Teams and have facilitated research &

development of our analytics solution, AIM™ (Actionable Insights Management). Today, I am a Program Manager, contributing to the long-term effectiveness and execution of strategic initiatives across our organization. I am so appreciative for my STEM journey, which led me to this rewarding career that allows me to be a supportive mother, just like my mother was to me.

Do you have a child in your life who shares a deep curiosity in STEM? Be their champion! Would you consider giving your time and resources to help non-profit organizations like SARSEF (<https://sarsef.org/>). Your engagement could profoundly impact someone's life and help shape a great future for humanity.

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