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SECME PATH LEADS TEACHER TO SUCCESS

As an eighth-grade student, Kisha Williams became a parent, and had no idea what to do next.

"I knew I wanted to do something successful in my life, I just didn't know what path I wanted to take,



Williams

she explained. Williams chose to stay in school to make a better life for herself and her son Terrell. While attending Suncoast High School, Williams found her path: The Science, Engineering, Communication and Mathematics Excellence program.

The program focuses on introducing students, especially minorities and girls, to science, engineering, communications and math. It gave Williams a definitive goal in engineering and the motivation to achieve it.

Seven years after graduating from the program, Williams is ending her reign as the national 2003 SECME Teacher of the Year. She was honored in Nashville, Tenn., last summer where she, along with three other finalists, waited on stage to hear the winner announced. When Williams' name was called out, the 25-year-old could hardly believe it since she had only been teaching for four years, which was more than the qualifying three-year standard, but still less than her competitors.

"The people I was running against have been teaching for years, and I thought my age might hurt me," she said, "but they just looked at straight facts."

The road leading to this honor was filled with many tasks, the first of which was to be nominated by a SECME affiliated person. For Williams, that was Sharon Schlossberg, the dean of engineering at Florida Atlantic University, who Williams had kept in touch with since her SECME days in high school.

After receiving the approval from Schlossberg, Williams had to prove herself to the judges. She designed a portfolio that included details of the program she developed, showing how she fared at competitions, providing evidence of community activities and partnerships and an outline of her motivational strategies.

Williams packed her life and work with the SECME program into a 1-inch binder and hoped for the best.

With the title, Williams was awarded \$5,000, a Sony laptop, and a CD player. Along with the award comes an invitation to speak about SECME in various locations such as Uganda and the Bahamas, along with the opportunity to be a master teacher at the program's upcoming National Summer Institute.

But Williams has returned to, and plans to stay in Palm Beach County, which has been her home since she was 2. As a graduate of Suncoast High School and Palm Beach Community College, Williams has worked in the area with Pratt and Whitney, and as a SECME coordinator for Suncoast. Her latest project is with the **Redemptive Life** Academy in West Palm Beach where she has founded and teaches the county's first, and only, SECME program in a private school.

"For me to come back and give to the program was a dream come true."

Williams is proud not only of SECME's success in the Academy, which placed second in a district competition, but also of the students' dedication to the program. After school they meet with Williams to create various working models, such as mousetrap cars and wooden bridges. Williams looks at the time spent with SECME as an opportunity to learn and created future bonds. Williams looks at the time spent with SECME as an opportunity to learn and created future bonds.

"You don't just get long-lasting friendships, but a family in SECME," she said.

A family which Williams feels she would have been lost without in high school. As a teen parent, Williams not only relied on her own family, but her SECME and school family as well. She formed strong bonds with her mentoring teachers and the peers she met through SECME events.

"Tough times are going to come, but it's how you react to these tough times that matters," Williams said.
