

LANCASTER

SCIENCE FACTORY

Lots of
FUN
to think about.

STEM IN ACTION

Profiles of STEM Professionals in our Community

Professionals in a wide variety of STEM careers are working during the COVID-19 outbreak to continue essential services in our community.

The Lancaster Science Factory is pleased to present profiles of these individuals and how they're putting STEM in Action right now.



Ronnie Medlock, High Steel Structures

What is your role at High Steel?

I'm the VP of Technical Services. My role is like that of chief technology officer. I help integrate new technologies into our shop practices; help bridge design engineers and

bridge owners understand them; and help write national codes and specifications for their use.

Technologies range from improved ways to weld and drill, to use of new materials and inspection methods. I also oversee quality control and training.

How has it changed during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Lots more calls and video conferencing! And no travel. Usually educating engineers is done in-person, so my normal schedule had me traveling 1 – 3 times per month. Given the importance of bridges to our nation's infrastructure, this work must continue. During the COVID-19 outbreak it is now being done through the internet.

In addition to your increased job responsibilities and long hours, you've been highly involved on our Board in helping the Science Factory navigate this crisis. How have you managed to make time for other causes, and why is that important to you now?

Supporting non-profit organizations is important because once the COVID-19 social distancing restriction are lifted, non-profits

that are closed must get back on their feet and continue the vital role they play in making our economy robust.

As an example, High Steel relies on more than 500 people to build bridges, and every year we replenish part of this workforce. The Science Factory helps illuminate the possibilities of a future STEM career at companies like High Steel so that young people can grow in the way that is best suited for them.

As we look to scientists to provide us with the facts about this outbreak, we are reminded of just how essential STEM education is to our community. Could you share any reflections you've had on this topic recently?

The connectivity we enjoy today through the internet is an extraordinarily crucial resource. Online conferencing allows companies like ours to continue working, just as it helps students continue learning. It allows activities to continue much more safely than otherwise. The internet facilitates the sharing of knowledge about COVID-19 and the best response practices for all of us. The outbreak has made life tougher, but imagine how great the challenges would be without this technology.

What have you been doing to stay sane during this time? Any media recommendations?

Staying in touch with family and friends is most important for my sanity. I recommend "Chernobyl" - it is an excellent miniseries with some important lessons for scientists and engineers. Finally, I feel lucky that we are going through this during spring - being outdoors with my family and our three dogs makes life seem almost normal! Almost. ■



Do you know someone working in a STEM profession during the COVID-19 outbreak? We would love to feature them in an upcoming interview. Please reach out to abakay@tlsf.org for more information.

For more information about the Lancaster Science Factory and how you can support our nonprofit mission visit:

www.LancasterScienceFactory.org

