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“My faith gives me hope to endure.” With Penny Bauder & Carolyn Hardwick

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By [Penny Bauder](#), Founder of Green Kid Crafts, Environmental Scientist | Entrepreneur | Founder of Green Kid Crafts



Historically speaking, there have been other national disasters and devastating situations when humans have had to endure to get to the other side of a dreary phase. For me, my faith gives me hope to endure. When I think about this period in time, it helps to know that other groups have endured hardship. We are fortunate to have medical facilities, homes for shelter, and the ability to work remotely.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives today. Many of us now have new challenges that come with working from home, homeschooling, and sheltering in place. As a part of my series about how women leaders in tech and STEM are addressing these new needs, I had the pleasure of interviewing Carolyn Hardwick. Carolyn is employed as Vice President and General Manager of Engineering at Squan. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, she began

her career in telecommunications with Airgate PCS (Sprint) in 2000 in Charleston, South Carolina. Her tenure includes 8 years in wireless site development, 11 years in business development with account management, and her most recent experience in engineering and operations. Carolyn holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Management from Clemson University and completed the Master of Arts in Teaching program in 2005 at the College of Charleston. She is a published author and member of the North American Case Research Association. Hardwick currently serves as President for WWLF, the Women's Wireless Leadership Forum. She has been a member of WWLF since 2003, serving as Executive Director of Ways and Means from 2013–2016, and WWLF Vice President from 2017–2018.

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you share with us the backstory about what brought you to your specific career path?

I was a teacher in South Carolina and sought a summer job in 2000, at which time I was also attending graduate school. I was a friend of the VP of Engineering at AirGate PCS (Sprint), and I was hired as a project coordinator to assist with the build-out of an 800-site project along coastal NC, SC, and GA. At the end of the summer, I was offered a full-time position at AirGate to eventually become a project manager in site development.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you started at your company?

The most interesting story is my transition from National Business Development Director to Vice President of our Engineering Division. Moving into an operations role has been an exciting challenge, but I have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with our engineering managers and our senior leadership team at SQUAN as the division grows its client base, service offerings, and revenue.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

I am thankful for my first mentor in telecom, Johnny Crawford (currently at Vertical Bridge). Johnny was the VP of Engineering and Operations at Airgate PCS when I started, and he encouraged me to learn as much as possible, resulting in professional growth. Johnny did not let my initial lack of technical experience limit the goals I set for myself.

Ok, thank you for all that. Now let's move to the main focus of our interview. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives today. Can you articulate to our readers what are the biggest family related challenges you are facing as a woman in STEM during this pandemic?

The biggest challenge is distancing myself from friends and family, as well as co-workers and colleagues in the industry. As an extrovert, there is a void not being able to interact with people in face-to-face settings.

Can you share what you've done to address those challenges?

Like many others, I have initiated Zoom calls with family, friends, and colleagues in order to stay "live" and receive updates.

Can you share the biggest work related challenges you are facing as a woman in STEM during this pandemic?

With WWLF, our tagline is "Keeping Women Connected". As President of the organization, this is a huge challenge. How can we keep our members connected with each other and foster leadership virtually? We want to continue to be a valued resource for our members and sponsors.

Can you share what you've done to address those challenges?

We have modified our educational efforts to include more webinars, and we started a monthly newsletter to include relevant links to current topics. Because we are unable to host regional Impact meetings, some WWLF CityReps have organized Zoom meetings to connect with their groups. At the appropriate time and under the guidance of national experts, we will reconvene for our quarterly meetings and annual conferences.

Can you share your advice about how to best work from home, while balancing the needs of homeschooling or the needs of a family?

The best advice I can give about working remotely is to have structure and a schedule. I am a list-maker and set daily action items. I set appropriate boundaries for myself and my team so that we accomplish tasks within reasonable parameters.

Can you share your strategies about how to stay sane and serene while sheltering in place for long periods with your family?

It's important to maintain a healthy level of exercise, rest, and "health breaks" throughout the day. As mentioned before, sheltering-in-place is difficult for extroverts and those who are accustomed to in-person meetings. When possible, I allow myself time to walk to a local park so that I can interface at safe distances with people.

Many people have become anxious from the dramatic jolts of the news cycle. The fears related to the coronavirus pandemic have understandably heightened a sense of uncertainty, fear, and loneliness. From your perspective, can you help our readers to see the "Light at the End of the Tunnel"? Can you share your "5 Reasons To Be Hopeful During this Corona Crisis"? If you can, please share a story or example for each.

Historically speaking, there have been other national disasters and devastating situations when humans have had to endure to get to the other side of a dreary phase. For me, my faith gives me hope to endure. When I think about this period in time, it helps to know that other groups have endured hardship. We are fortunate to have medical facilities, homes for shelter, and the ability to work remotely.

I also make every effort to see the silver lining of this challenging time. It helps to journal to express the emotions I'm feeling. When possible, I think of at least one reason to be grateful each day. For example, I have had extra time to organize a closet or donate unused items to a shelter.

Another reason to be hopeful is to have a support network of family, friends, and industry colleagues. We've heard the

phrase, “we are all in this together”, and there will be a time when we turn the corner. In the meantime, I am encouraged by a conglomeration of friends and family for guidance and support.

Lastly, I can be hopeful that I am using this time at home to learn something new, read a book which has been on my shelf, try a new recipe, or find something which will enrich my life during these days of quarantine.

From your experience, what are a few ideas that we can use to effectively offer support to our family and loved ones who are feeling anxious? Can you explain?

There are some wonderful online resources for daily devotionals or words of wisdom. A person can sign up to receive daily affirmations for professional or personal inspiration. I am hopeful that everyone has resources within their faith organization, family, company, or community for support.

Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

One of my favorite life lesson quotes is by Diane Ackerman, who said “I don’t want to get to the end of my life and find that I have just lived the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well.”

For me, this is a call to make every day count. I challenge myself to learn, to grow, to help others, and to set an example to the next generation in a positive way.

How can our readers follow you online?

LinkedIn profile linked in form.

Thank you so much for sharing these important insights. We wish you continued success and good health!

— *Published on May 20, 2020*



Penny Bauder, Founder of Green Kid Crafts, **Environmental Scientist I Entrepreneur I Founder of Green Kid Crafts**

Penny is an environmental scientist-turned-entrepreneur. She's worked as a climate scientist, an environmental planner, and a wilderness park ranger. Motivated by a passion to raise a generation of environmental leaders, in 2010 Penny founded Green Kid Crafts, a children's media company that provides kids around the world with convenient and eco-friendly STEAM activities. Today, it's become a leader in the subscription industry, with over 1 million packages shipped worldwide that have exposed a generation to think about and take a leadership role in sustainability. Penny, her husband Jeff, and her children Rowan and Declan live together in San Diego, California. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Management and an M.S. in Environmental Science. Penny has over 20 years of experience in entrepreneurship, management, strategy and finance. She's a seasoned leader, an inspiring speaker, an encouraging business mentor, and a creative writer. You can learn more about Green Kid Crafts at <https://www.greenkidcrafts.com/> and follow Penny's stories and updates at <https://www.instagram.com/greenkidcrafts/> and <https://twitter.com/bauderpenny>.

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