

SEC Division Chief is proudly a part of the 27% of STEM workers who are women

By Maya Green, August 4, 2023



SEC's Kimberly Jacobs

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — The U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command's Software Engineering Center's Division Chief for Infrastructure Services, Kimberly Jacobs, is the essence of efficiency in the workplace and at home. As a woman in science, technology, engineering, and math, she has contributed to the diversity of thought supporting CECOM.

#### Woman in STEM

The Florida native attended University of Central Florida for her undergrad in aerospace engineering before moving to Maryland for better job prospects. After working full-time for a few years, Jacobs pursued and earned her master's degree at Loyola University in computer science.

Jacobs' interest in STEM began in high school. Her biggest supporter was her father, who was an electrical engineer back in the 80s.

"He was the one who encouraged me to consider pursuing a degree in aerospace engineering," she said.

The Space Shuttle program was active in Florida and Jacobs wanted to work for NASA, she said.

Recently, Jacobs learned that only 27% of STEM workers are women. This percentage surprised her, and she didn't expect it to be that low, she said. She hopes to do whatever she can to encourage young women to pursue a future in STEM.

Supporting the warfighter for more than two decades

Jacobs came to APG as a contractor and decided to join the Army not only for the competitive salary, but also the benefits that came with being an Army civilian. For the past 14 years, Jacobs has enjoyed the duties that come with supporting the warfighter.

As the division chief for the infrastructure services division, Jacobs oversees the network management, systems administration, and information assurance for SEC's software development environments to include the Software Engineering Environment. Her division also provides software replication and distribution services for the Army ensuring that fielded C5ISR software receives required security patches and updates.

Jacobs' day-to-day duties include providing support to her staff by ensuring they have the funding, proper tools, and leadership support.

"A big thing I take seriously as a supervisor is that the members of my team understand why they're being asked to do what they do," she said. "[Providing the why] goes a long way to increasing their motivation because they can see the value in what they're doing. It also helps them stay synchronized with the rest of the team. It helps them make more well-informed decisions if something comes up and needs to be [solved]."

Jacobs' favorite thing about work is the people she works with. The team works well together to achieve goals and support each other's needs on a daily basis—an atmosphere that promotes true camaraderie, she said.

Jacobs added that she likes to work side-by-side with her employees to get to know them on a personal level, which builds trust and understanding on both sides.

“Having that trust factor is really important if you want a successful team,” she said.

### Work-life balance

When Jacobs isn't working, she disconnects by enjoying the outdoors. Her favorite activities are hiking, kayaking, festivals, and concerts.

Jacobs realized early in her professional career that making time for herself and family was very important and that balancing work with her personal life was a must, she said.

“Something I've noticed over the past few years, is that Army leadership, at the highest levels, have made it a priority to promote [a healthy] work-life balance,” she said.

Jacobs recommends prioritizing your workload. Not everything can be a top priority, she said. To avoid burnout, she encourages employees to practice determining what tasks are worth doing and giving themselves permission to say “no” without feeling guilty.

To simplify tasks, she uses automation technology, when possible, in her work and personal life.

“People have to be able to disconnect from work,” she stated. “With teleworking, people are always [online]; they're responding to emails, taking calls, and in MS Teams chat. You have to turn off those work laptops and cellphones; take the time you need for yourself.”