

Speakers Encourage Students to Become Women in Charge

James Brown once sang "It's a Man's Man's Man's World." While that sentiment may have been true at the time of the recording in 1966, thankfully the world has changed steadily since that time. Yet parity for women is far from complete. Knowing that change doesn't happen overnight or without the appropriate education and training, two teachers at Seneca Middle School are striving to expose a select group of female students to a wide array of possibilities for their future careers. The teachers, Deborah Belflower and Delaine Childress, lead the Women in Charge mentoring group at the school and have recently begun hosting a series of women quest speakers to acquaint the young ladies with a variety of once male-dominated career choices that they may choose to pursue.



The first speakers represented and discussed two male-dominated career choices that are about as far apart in education, training and work environment as is possible; yet each are now viable options for women. When meeting Simons Welter for the first time, fly fishing guide doesn't immediately come to mind as her career. And for her, it wasn't always what she wanted to do. A Clemson University graduate with a B.S. degree in Graphic Communications, she only began working as a guide approximately ten years ago following years spent with her children and in other career fields. Welter now enjoys fishing and helping others in their pursuit of fly fishing as the only female guide for Brookings' Anglers based in Cashiers, NC. She was able to share with the Women in Charge students what it takes to be an effective guide – not just enthusiasm for fishing but a solid understanding of the mechanics of using imitation flies and specific knowledge of the fish biology as well as that of their favorite foods and of the natural habitat of the target fish and the rivers in which they swim and reproduce.

The second speaker was Dr. Kara Jo Dodgins, an optometrist at Clemson Eye, a practice employing the full range of eye care professionals - opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. Unlike Welter, Dr. Dodgins has known since the eighth grade that she wanted to be an optometrist. This realization followed years of specialized eye care for a condition called amblyopia (lazy eye) she struggled with as a child. With that goal always in mind, she graduated from USC Upstate with B.S. degree in Biology and then earned her Doctorate in Optometry from the University of Alabama, Birmingham. When she spoke to the assembled students she conveyed with obvious passion what it takes to become an eye care provider, what each job entails, what it is she loves about her career and how the profession is attracting more and more women.







