

# How a Search for Aspiring Engineers in the Motorsports/Automotive Industry Led to Scholarships for Women of Color

*The Story Behind STEAM Sports Foundation*

ATLANTA, GA, USA, February 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When STEAM Sports Foundation was created in 2016 veteran sports and television executive Bob Dickinson knew he wanted to help guide STEM/STEAM students to innovative careers in sports and entertainment.

Research showed that by the year 2025 more than 80 percent of jobs would require some sort of STEM or STEAM background. This included sports and entertainment.



Scholarship recipients at Hendrick Motor Sports

Those efforts took root through the STEAM Sports Summit held in conjunction with San Jose State and a three-year program with Honda's IndyCar program in concert with leading automotive engineering universities.

“

We believe very strongly in unique career opportunities for those who previously were not encouraged to explore these innovative fields nor believed those opportunities existed for them.”

*Bob Dickinson*

As 2019 rolled to an end, he asked “What next?”.

In all candor, he was not expecting the “next.” The pandemic threw the foundation's progress and development a curve. It pivoted. And it persevered. Its focus became scholarships, even though it realized that in a challenging fund-raising environment it would likely have to self-fund the first year if it was to launch a scholarship program for a very specific group of students.

Women.

[Women of Color.](#)

Women engineers or technicians.

Women looking to EVs and AVs (electric vehicles; autonomous vehicles) as potential automotive careers.

Women of Color who might even want to become engineers in the fast-paced world of [motorsports](#).

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“In our effort to support racial [diversity](#), equity and inclusion,” says Dickinson, “we at the STEAM Sports Foundation believe very strongly in unique career opportunities for those who previously were not encouraged to explore these innovative fields nor believed those opportunities existed for them. We very much want to be leading agents and advocates for change.”

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His board thought he was a bit crazy at first.

“You won’t get any applicants,” he was warned.

“But we did,” smiled Dickinson. “We succeeded. The diverse field of about 20 applicants the inaugural year was narrowed to four worthy young women. A Black. An Asian. A Native American. A Hispanic. We couldn’t have drawn it up any better.”

This could work!

Kettering University’s Kimberly Betty from Jamaica was the ultimate recipient. With the



Dickinson shares STEAM Sports Foundation story at Women in Motorsports N.A. summit



**STEAM Sports  
Foundation**

foundation's help, she went on to intern at the General Motors Research and Technical Center in Concord, NC, just outside Charlotte in close proximity to Charlotte Motor Speedway.

The following year, Michael Jordan's NASCAR race team, 231I, contributed to fund multiple scholarships. 231I's President Steve Lauletta recognized that what STEAM Sports Foundation was doing to bring minorities into motorsports was much along the lines of its commitment, headed by driver Bubba Wallace, to do much the same. Wayne State's Ashley Jones and Universal Technical Institute's Jinelee Galindez received grants.

Last year, Dickinson rearranged the foundation's board of directors, adding two minority female executives, Alba Colon of Hendrick Motor Sports and Ashli Bobo from Nissan, and a Black engineer from General Motors, Dom Lester, who had been involved in many levels of projects at GM including its motorsports program.

Lester guided Dickinson toward GM's diversity, equity, and inclusion group. The result was a contribution over two years that would fund up to 10, \$5,000 scholarships for women of color who aspire to careers in automotive or motorsports engineering. Last year's recipients included Jones, Arisa Chu (Stanford) Taya Dinkins-Goldsmith (Oakland University), and Tanya Andres (Universal Technical Institute/Lisle).

After granting the last round of scholarships, Dickinson had yet another idea. Let's push the envelope even further. Let's bring the scholarship winners to a race weekend in Charlotte. There they could visit and tour the GM Tech Center and some of GM's top NASCAR race team operations.

Nothing like an up-close see, touch, feel, and smell experience.

The foundation is already planning to take this year's recipients back for another "Immersion Tour" and perhaps add a few bells and whistles. Applications for the 2024-25 academic year scholarships opened the first of the year and close May 15. Recipients will be selected by mid-June. Applications are open to rising college juniors and seniors as well as high school seniors or first-year students at a technical college studying to become a certified automotive technician. To date, the foundation has provided funds to two technical students in addition to the college students.

"In order for women of color to believe there are career opportunities in what can be argued is the world's most vital industry, the transportation industry, they must see successful people who look like them," says Dickinson. "Recognizing that motorsport is often where innovation begins, we encourage our scholarship winners to become pioneers and leaders for those who wish to enter the exciting motorsports, automotive field."

About STEAM Sports Foundation

STEAM Sports Foundation works with companies, educators and sports organizations to develop

initiatives around science, technology, engineering, arts and math that prepare and excite America's youth in an effort to unite business, education and sports while creating tomorrow's vibrant workforce. The Georgia-based 501c3's primary focus is on scholarships and educational summits that involve both students and corporations. For more information about the grants and how to give, visit its website - [www.steamsportsfoundation.org](http://www.steamsportsfoundation.org) - or contact STEAM Sports Foundation Executive Director Bob Dickinson at [bob@steamsportsfoundation.org](mailto:bob@steamsportsfoundation.org).

Donations are supported via Benevity and can be made through the website with Pay Pal.

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