

Small Acts, Big Ripples

Julianna Arcese, P.Eng., is an active chapter volunteer who is dedicated to supporting the engineering community.

By Sharon Aschaiek

As an experienced civil engineer who contributes to municipal transportation projects, Julianna Arcese, P.Eng., understands the importance of big-picture thinking. But that skill is one she also applies to her community engagement work to help foster a strong and inclusive engineering profession in Ontario. Arcese regularly carves out time to volunteer for efforts to educate her peers, encourage more youth to consider engineering, and especially, empower women to rise in the profession.

"Being a female engineer, and with there being a minority of females in engineering, I want to show representation," says Arcese, a senior project engineer with Guelph-based consulting firm J.L. Richards & Associates.

The Waterloo resident is actively involved in PEO's Grand River Chapter. For the last four years, she has volunteered for its Events Committee, which organizes activities to help engineers stay current on best practices in the profession and discover new innovations that affect their work. Currently the chair, she has helped plan and execute tours of sites such as the concrete pipe plant of Rinker Materials, a top player in southern Ontario's infrastructure supply chain; Evolv1, Canada's first zero-carbon building; and the head office of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, which has Canada's first Canadian Standards Association-compliant smart blue roof for capturing and reusing rainwater.

"As I build my network in the community, it's important to me to share information with engineers that can support their professional development," says Arcese, who earned her bachelor of engineering science degree at Western University in 2013.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Arcese's involvement with the chapter began in 2017, the year she became licensed. She first joined its 30 by 30 Committee, which focuses on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in the engineering profession. Its purpose aligns with Engineers Canada's formal goal to raise the percentage of newly licensed engineers in the country who are women to 30 per cent by 2030. As she was highly involved in Western's Women in Engineering group, including serving as its president, she was keen to continue this advocacy. In her four years on that committee, Arcese spoke about her experiences in the profession to engineering students at local universities. She was also involved in organizing



seminars, workshops and an annual 30 by 30 speaker series to help women build their sense of agency and advance in the profession.

"It's about finding your voice and your confidence so you can bring forth your ideas," says Arcese in describing the objective of some of the professional development offerings she helped organize for female engineers.

Having worked entirely at engineering consultancies, Arcese sought to connect with other such practitioners. In 2017, she joined the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies—Ontario (ACEC-Ontario), an

advocacy group representing about 140 engineering consulting companies. Participating in its Grand River Chapter, she got involved with and eventually became chair of its Young Professionals Group, for which she planned educational and social events for other new engineers and spoke about consulting engineering to university students. In 2022, she joined ACEC-Ontario's Future Leaders Network, which offers networking and learning opportunities for young engineers at member firms.

Last year, Arcese joined ACEC-Ontario's Women's Network, a networking and leadership-building group that is particularly focused on addressing the attrition of women in the industry. The group runs workshops and webinars on topics such as self-advocacy in the workplace and annual breakfast meetups across Ontario for networking. Last year, Arcese hosted two of these meetups in Guelph, the last of which was to mark National STEM/STEAM Day on November 8. She sees her contributions to this group as enabling female consulting engineers to share strategies and insights to excel.

"Being an engineer in consulting isn't something that's spoken about much at school, so we learn a lot from each other," Arcese says.

As Arcese continues to progress as an engineer, she is keen to lift as she climbs by sharing her professional wisdom with local youths. To that end, in 2021 she joined the speakers' bureau of the Business & Education Partnership of Waterloo Region, a charity that runs programs for grades 7 to 12 students to explore diverse career options. Arcese speaks to these students at their schools and in online events about her professional journey and the rewards of her work.

"I like being able to inspire members of the younger generation to consider engineering," she says. "I want to offer support and let them know, 'You can do this.'" **e**