

Volunteering spotlight



I'm Angie...

I am a Senior Engineer in Command, Control and Signalling at Network Rail. I'm currently helping to deliver new Traffic Management Systems that will allow us to capitalise on a more efficient use of the railway network.

I trained in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, but when I was growing up I really wanted to make robotic puppets for film and theatre. For the last 15 years I have been leading and directing an open-access youth theatre group in my spare time, so I still get the opportunity to get involved in theatrical technology. I'm also a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Ambassador and it was through both of these things that gave me the opportunity to get involved in Imagineering.

What did I do?

I was volunteer 'head-hunted' to participate in a Coventry schools-based programme called STEAM. (The 'A' is for Arts.) The purpose is to inspire young people in the Coventry and Warwickshire area to 'inadvertently' use STEM skills whilst participating in creative theatrical activities, with an aim to make technical thinking and craftsmanship an everyday tool in everything they do.

What did I give and get?

I was part of the team developing the material for the schools programme. We ran workshops with the children to get them to think about mechanical movement and how they could design a 'Terrible Tractor' from *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. They had to think about what they'd learnt about the characters and how that would be reflected in the machine. I was really impressed that they'd used the evidence in the book to guide their design decisions, often without them realising it. I helped them devise their concept and make working models of their machines over a series of workshops, which they presented to their peers.

It was great to witness the satisfaction they were getting from coming up with an idea and refining it to something that moved and had features they could talk confidently about. See engineering excite them, and how they could work together to get there really boosted my motivation for my job.

What have I learned?

The children don't think in silos, it's not maths and then art; it's everything all at once. They just need to be encouraged to review what they know. The things they created were a lot more sophisticated than I imagined 8 year olds would come up with! It can be easy in the day job to get stuck in a rut but there's always something new to learn, even if it's just enthusiasm. It was a real, "when was the last time you did something for the first time?" moment.

For more information please get in touch...

Angie Adams: Email. Angie.Adams@networkrail.co.uk

STEM: <https://www.stem.org.uk/>