

# COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN IN DEEP FOUNDATIONS

The Deep Foundations Institute Women in Deep Foundations Committee is comprised of women and men who are advocates for retaining women in the deep foundations industry. The goal is to foster greater success and interest of professional women in the industry by promoting networking events, endorsing outreach and building mentoring relationships. Mission Statement: *“To enhance professional opportunities for women in the deep foundations industry.”*

## Spotlight on Lori Simpson and Women@Langan

All she needed to hear were the words “Women in Deep Foundations” and she was in!

For nearly 30 years, Lori Simpson has been an accomplished geotechnical engineer in the San Francisco Bay area and frequently attended DFI events. But, she felt that the organization fell short in drawing women in.

Few women attended DFI events and the atmosphere was not always comfortable. Many assumed she was a wife of an attendee. When DFI magazine ran what she believed was a sexist advertisement, she wrote a letter calling them out. The response she received seemed inadequate.

Gradually, the atmosphere shifted to be more welcoming toward women. But, WIDF created an exponential change. Through WIDF, women who are newcomers can dive right in and network with other women.

Lori walks her talk.

She helped launch the Women@Langan initiative with other Langan stockholders to support the career development of women. Although the firm has strong initiatives and programs for career development, this group of stockholders wanted a dedicated initiative for women’s career development.

The mission of Women@Langan is to foster an atmosphere of mentorship and support to empower women to achieve career and personal success.

Lori sees WIDF as an extension of Women@Langan.

In high school, Lori frequently heard of the shortage of

women engineers. She excelled in math so she chose to attend Stanford University and declared civil engineering for her major — the other engineering majors seemed to geeky for her — and set her sights on becoming a structural engineer.

Lori loved engineering and never looked back.

A summer job working for a geotechnical and geological consulting firm changed her aspiration from structural to the geotechnical field.

Every day was different. One day she was in the office doing calculations and drawing pictures. Another day she was in the field on a construction site. The following day, she was back in the office writing reports.

Lori was hooked on the variety of things to do, all of which she found interesting and required creativity.

Lori earned her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Stanford University in 1987 and her Master of Science in Geotechnical Engineering from University of California, Berkeley in 1988.

Soon thereafter, she married Dave Simpson, an engineering geologist, whom she met during a summer internship.

Lori joined Treadwell & Rollo in 1990 where Frank L. Rollo, PE, GE, principal engineer and a co-founder of Treadwell & Rollo, Inc., became her mentor as well as Richard D. Rodgers, PE, GE, the managing principal of the geotechnical engineering group in the Bay Area.

Not only have they taught her how to excel as an engineer and consultant, they supported her career even when she reduced her hours to four days a week to care for her children.

She maintained this schedule for a number of years and feels that it is a significant contributor to her loyalty to the firm and to her career satisfaction.

In 2010, the firm was purchased by Langan. She says Langan and Treadwell & Rollo made a great fit and both cultures have integrated well over the last six years.

Langan's core values are technical excellence, practical experience, and client responsiveness. Within these core values, the culture is one of entrepreneurialism; employees are encouraged to expand Langan's capabilities, services, and outreach. Langan provides a lot of support for these activities.

Still, Lori thinks that many women are less likely to "go for it" the same way men do. Studies show women wait to be asked instead of speaking up and take fewer risks overall. Having Women@Langan helps women feel supported to step up and advance their careers in parallel with their male colleagues.

Women@Langan is composed of local committees. Each office, or group of offices in a region, has a committee and plans their own activities and meetings.

Once a month, the committee leaders have a conference call to ensure the program continues to progress firm wide.

Once a quarter, all committees meet via video conference to learn what is being done at the corporate level, share what the local committees are planning, provide ideas for the newsletter, and recognize promotions and celebrations (life events).

Women@Langan activities include internal and external speakers discussing a range of topics such as professional development, tips on business development from the business side of Langan and women's experiences in leadership and career development.

The group listens to and has follow-up discussions on various Ted Talks.

The committees support local walks for charities and professional clothing drives. Other social activities include wine tastings and tours of Langan projects.

Almost all of Lori's work experience has been in the San Francisco Bay area. She has provided geotechnical engineering services extensively in Mission Bay, a new neighborhood in San Francisco.

Mission Bay is a 300-acre site that is being entirely redeveloped — residential, commercial, biotech, research labs, a UCSF campus, parks, streets, and other components.

It is a great place for a geotechnical engineer because the site is reclaimed land, with poorly-placed fill that has a high potential for liquefaction. Up to 120 feet of the soil is comprised of weak, compressible clay called "Bay Mud."

The majority of the Mission Bay projects require ground improvement to mitigate liquefaction and lateral spreading, as well as deep foundations.



Lori also works on a variety of other projects throughout the Bay Area. Currently, she is working on several high-rise developments in both San Francisco and Oakland.

Lori and Dave have lived in Berkeley for 23 years where they raised two daughters, Claire and Lila. Both are now college students. Claire attends UCLA while Lila attends University of California, Davis. When not busy with work or family, Lori enjoys running, swimming, hiking, backpacking, knitting, and cooking. ■

**“I've known Lori for several years as a welcoming, organized, reliable and dedicated DFI Committee Chair. She is a knowledgeable and confident engineer; an asset to the DFI team. I look forward to working with her in her new role on the DFI Board of Trustees.”**

**- Mary Ellen Bruce Large, P.E., D.GE | Technical Activities Manager, Deep Foundations Institute**