

I AM STEM

Cristina González Alcalá, Ph.D.

Cristina González Alcalá, Ph.D. is a Community Investment Officer for the Akron Community Foundation. She explains how she came to the United States from Mexico and everything she has achieved since then. Her energy and mentality of seeking help and taking every opportunity have taken her far and she wants others to know that everything bad or good will pass eventually and that you don't lose anything from trying.

Did you have mentors and do you think they helped you achieve your goals?

Life gives you mentors and in Mexico, we call them angels or whatever you want, but of course I have. Thank God I always had people who supported and believed in me, starting with my mom and my family. My mom was always giving me positive lessons, always saying that I could do everything, always supporting me.

The truth is that sometimes people come into your life, and maybe at the moment you do not see them as mentors, maybe you see them, as friends, as good people who come to help you, but you have to become aware sometimes in those moments and say "you know what? This person can help me," When I had these relationships I was always the type to be like "you know what? Can you help me with this, can you help me with that or what do you think of this? What do you think of that?" Always without shame. I asked them please help me and thank God they helped me. So I always anchored myself in people who were and are there throughout my life.

Have you always been outgoing and open to opportunities?

One of the messages my mom gave me was "You've already been told no" right? With that, I'd go off into the world. If I ask and they tell me no, what do I lose? It's always about what I can gain because getting a no, it's already the status quo right? And what you gain or get is how you disrupt the status quo. That mentality helped me to know that even though something didn't go well, I learned something. What matters the most is that you learn.

What does STEM mean to you?

Sure, it's science, technology, engineering, and math, but it's mostly curiosity, it's the curiosity to know how things work and curiosity to want to be someone who can influence how things work or how to fix things. In science and technology, I have mathematics and engineering, for me, I summarize it as curiosity and that is what it means to me. We must continue to be curious, continue to want to innovate, venture, and discover.

"YOU HAVE TO CONTINUE TO BE CURIOUS, KEEP WANTING TO INNOVATE, VENTURE, AND DISCOVER."



The NeoSTEM Ecosystem is a collaboration of organizations throughout Northeast Ohio who partner to improve STEM educational opportunities for all students. Formed in 2014, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem's goals are to improve meaningful STEM learning opportunities for all students in the Northeast Ohio region. As one of 94 ecosystems operating as a part of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem holds regular virtual and in-person meetings to learn about what community educational needs are and to develop solutions for those needs. For more information, please contact us at info@neostem.org.

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