

Tieline



**Employee
Spotlight:
Chris Cerda**

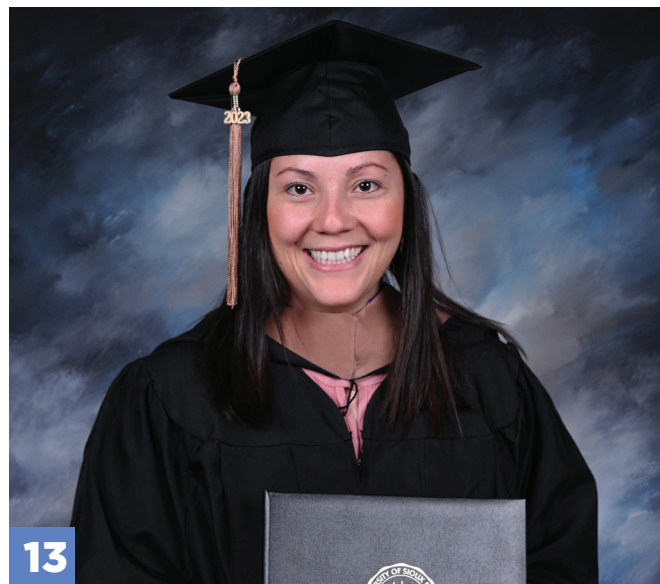
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**Bedford Donates to
Local Community
Service Project**

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Bedford donates to local **community.** **service** project

BIO Girls of Jackson/Lakefield assembled three plastic lumber chairs for Jackson County Schools

By Kristy Thurmer, Sr. Mechanical Engineer

“**B**IO: Beautiful Inside and Out. This is what BIO Girls is aiming to help girls believe they are; beautiful, inside, and out. Stemming from the uphill battle adolescent girls face with low self-esteem, BIO Girls was born... with a mission to change that.”

In November 2022 a close friend of mine, Chelsea, presented the idea of bringing BIO Girls to the Jackson-Lakefield community. She volunteered to be their director and needed a co-director; and wanted to know if I would partner with her. It took me looking at the BIO Girls’ webpage once, and I was all in.

The program includes many lessons and activities for young girls in grades 2-6 that encourage a positive mindset with regard to themselves and others.

The lesson I look forward to the most is “Change-makers”. We use our entire session time to do a volunteer project. Chelsea and I pick and plan it. We have to line up donations and volunteers

for what we decide on a very small budget. Last year we redid landscaping around the youth center that let us meet in their facility. The plants were donated by a local business. When it came time to plan this year, I was in the midst of setting goals for the continuous lumber line here at Bedford to be up and running. It sparked an idea. As one of the few female engineers in the area, I wanted to show the girls that they could build anything.



Although the continuous lumber line was not ready, the molded lumber line was. That team was producing Bedford recycled lumber and getting ready to launch the employee purchase program. I approached Jay M, Colin, and David and asked “could we get three chairs for the BIO Girls to assemble?” Without hesitation they agreed to the plan. Trevor and Derek worked the deadline and by week 6, I loaded up my van with three chairs worth of recy-



cluded plastic lumber (cut specifically for the chairs), a bag of screws, and some rough engineering drawings.

I started off the session asking the 18 girls and ten mentors “Who likes to put things together?”. One mentor raised her hand. I explained that one thing I love to do is put together furniture; the kind you buy from stores and it comes in pieces. To me that is the ultimate puzzle. The group just stared at me. I knew we had a challenge ahead of us but we were all in!

We divided into three groups and went to work. Never could I have imagined what took place the next hour. It was not easy! I went from group to group making sure they were getting everything right. I first noticed that many of the mentors and kids, while willing to jump in and try it, had never used a drill. As I got them set up, I would walk to check on another group. This group had assembled the wrong pieces. We took them apart and

laid out the plan to correct it. The next group was just staring at what they put together trying to figure out what was next. A quick glance at the drawings and they were off on their next step! The quickest group to finish had none of the boards on the seat lined up in a straight line on one side. So, we took it apart in some spots, reworked it and got it back together.

All three groups finished within ten minutes of each other. The mentors and BIO Girls posed with pride as we took pictures. Some asked to take the chairs home. Fortunately, we had plans for the chairs: They will reside at each of the Jackson-Lakefield schools (Riverside Elementary, Immanuel Lutheran, and Pleasantview Elementary/ JCC Middle School). The girls are so proud to show off their chairs to peers, teachers, parents, etc.

We were so grateful to Bedford and the engineering teams that made this possible. Knowing that the company



I work for supports the non-profit organization that I pour my heart and free time into is amazing. These 18 girls had an experience that none of them had had before, and they will be talking about and pointing out for years to come. •