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Computer Science Recruitment in the 21st Century: Improving the Image of Computer Science with 4th-7th Graders, Especially Females

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Joint project with Laura Woodard

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The goal of this project is to create a tool to aid in reversing the alarming trend of decreasing interest in Computer Science (CS) among American students, particularly females. The current generation of American female students tends to be attracted to fields with clear social relevancy. Middle school is a crucial time when students form their opinions about math and science; this is also the time when they begin picking elective classes and, in the case of female students, all too often not picking the math and science classes that would prepare them for a Computer Science career. Our tool will be software aimed at middle school students, with emphasis on female appeal, showcasing the social relevancy of CS through a series of highly visual games and puzzles, illustrating the careers of CS alumni. They will be connected in a manner inspired by "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?"

Kristen is the daughter of Janet and Terry Loesch of St. Louis, Missouri. She is a senior in the computer science department at UMR. Kristen is an active member of organizations and honor societies such as Omicron Delta Kappa, Chi Omega Fraternity, Order of Omega and others. Kristen also volunteers her time to recruiting within the department. Outside of school, Kristen enjoys reading, line dancing, and ballroom dancing.