



An Interview With Liz Hunter

Goggle Woman 2017

by Amanda L. Blyth

Each year the “face” of AISTech is casually referred to as “Goggle Man.” This year, for the second time in its history, AISTech features a Goggle Woman — Liz Hunter of California Steel Industries Inc. (CSI). Hunter has been an AIST member since 2011 and is a former AIST Foundation scholarship recipient. She graduated from Colorado School of Mines in 2013 with a B.S. degree in metallurgical and materials engineering. She is currently pursuing her M.B.A. at University of California – Riverside and will graduate this June. She is active in the Southern California Member Chapter and has been with CSI since 2013. *Iron & Steel Technology* sat down with Hunter, metallurgical engineer — pickle line and cold reduction at CSI, to talk about this unique opportunity.

As a past AIST scholarship recipient, you’ve been involved with AIST for a number of years. Tell us about how your involvement with AIST began.

I was awarded three scholarships from AIST — two from the Southern California Member Chapter as a grad student and one from the AIST Foundation when I was in my undergrad.

How did that spur your involvement in AIST?

I joined AIST as part of Material Advantage in college. I was a junior when I joined in 2011. I went to Colorado School of Mines, which has a very ferrous-metallurgy-heavy program, and started enjoying physical metallurgy. I thought about pursuing a co-op in the industry in order to gain experience and see if I enjoyed steel so I spoke with my adviser,

Dr. Kip Findley. He encouraged me to pursue a co-op and I soon received an opportunity with SSAB Alabama. During my co-op, I was in the process of applying for an AIST Foundation scholarship. I was being interviewed for the scholarship, and the gentleman who interviewed me asked, “What are you actively doing to pursue your interest in the industry?” I was proud that I could say that I was working with SSAB for the next eight months. I really fell in love with the industry and had opportunities to meet individuals in AIST by being at MS&T. And I just knew I wanted to be involved in the organization. I saw value in the people who are in it and what they’d done for me in terms of supporting my education, plus the opportunity to work for a steel mill for eight months and fund my upcoming study abroad program. I knew I wanted to be involved.

How has membership in AIST benefited you?

I’ve met so many wonderful people. Some of them have become somewhat of professional mentors, like Mark Zipf at Cold Rolling Technologies Inc. I’ve met brilliant people who have a lot of experience that you can’t buy and you don’t come across every day. The value of hearing people’s stories, advice and encouragement in being a young engineer in what people on the outside might consider a dying field is hard to quantify. It’s important to have those connections and those relationships and further your knowledge of the industry as a whole. I love the camaraderie and the community. AIST brings us together. The learning opportunities provided through their technology training have also really helped me to expand my knowledge of steel processing.

Tell us about your position at California Steel Industries. What are your day-to-day duties?

I work as a metallurgist in the pickle line and cold reduction mill here at CSI. Ultimately, I partner with and support operations in our efforts to provide quality products and service to our customers. This includes quality control and continuous improvement. I am responsible for investigating and resolving quality issues that are either incoming or outgoing from these lines, which includes dispositioning non-conforming product. I, along with my colleagues, investigate any quality-related claims as well as work with

our customers to provide technical support and assist in developing different grades or processing parameters that better suit their needs. This involves working with many different departments at CSI such as sales, marketing, production planning, operations, maintenance and production control.

Is CSI supportive of you being “Goggle Woman?”

Yes, Ted Tamai (CSI’s former president) congratulated me; people from finance; Scott Starr, executive vice president, operations; Robbie (Woods, senior fire and safety engineer for CSI) came back from AISTech 2016 and brought me all kinds of promotional pieces with my face on them. I’ve had several people come by. Yes, CSI was very supportive. I think, as a company, we’re really proud of who we are. We’re smaller than the big guys, so having our name on AISTech is really special to us because we’re an important player on the west coast, and we’re really proud of our company.

How do you feel about being the second Goggle Woman in AISTech history?

It’s really exciting. It’s kind of funny how it all happened. I told Ken Landau (AIST’s publications manager) at one of AIST’s conferences that I wanted to be the first female president of AIST. But really, I also wanted to be the face of AISTech, and a month later I got an email from someone at AIST, asking if I was interested. Women are much more present in our industry now. Getting women’s faces out there is so important, especially for young people, to show that women are present in the industry in many capacities — not just corporate but engineers, operators and mechanics in the mill. We can do anything men can do, and it makes me proud. I’m proud to represent my company and my gender. It’s pretty exciting. ♦