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Li-Hong Xu - A Light in the East

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In her academic career, Li-Hong Xu was a source of inspiration and enlightenment to many students, especially young women, both in the university setting and in the larger world. Her research itself was based on light, as she was a molecular spectroscopist, employing a variety of laser systems in her own lab and in recent years utilizing facilities at the Canadian Light Source in Saskatoon, the “brightest light in Canada”. The details of her life and work present a fascinating picture of a dynamic and determined woman who embraced a wide variety of challenges and rose to prominence in her international and national research communities, her university teaching community, and her wider home community in Saint John and Atlantic Canada. Here we will touch on some of her notable achievements and on activities she undertook in teaching and community outreach. Some of these were the innovative “Party Physics” in her first-year course, the “Physics Circle” she introduced for girls at the Public Library to arouse their interest in physics and science, and her demonstration shows where she would recruit keen girls from her class to show off a variety of physics “Magic” to an admiring and frequently amazed public at Science Fairs and the annual UNBSJ school Math competitions and open houses.

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