# Tony: A STEM Growth Success Story

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By Willona Sloan

The region around Aberdeen Proving Ground takes pride in training new generations to carry on the tradition of innovation and service. America's Defense Communities talked to one person about the opportunities he's gotten, what he's done with them and how he's giving back.

For Tony Harris, participating in the Kenneth V. Hilton Mentorship Program at Edgewood High School changed the trajectory of his life.

The mentoring program was sponsored by the U.S. Army Materiel Systems Analysis Activity (AMSAA) at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Every month, mentors from AMSAA visited Harris' high school to speak with participants in the program.

"They talked about being respectful. They encouraged us. They inspired us. They supported us academically," Harris said. "They talked to us about different STEM careers. I had never actually met a black man who was an engineer or a scientist or a mathematician. That was inspiring to me. That put a fire in me to work a lot harder in school. I was a very good student, but I worked harder because I knew that if this was something that I wanted to do, I needed to put my best foot forward. These guys were an example of that."

Harris graduated from Morgan State University, where he studied electrical engineering. Interning at AMSAA while in college helped him to chart his career path. Today, Harris is a systems engineer, working with the Network and Comms Team at AMSAA. With support from AMSAA, he also earned a master's degree in systems engineering.

Harris is now the co-lead of the mentoring program, working with a team of dedicated volunteers to continue to inspire students at Edgewood.

"We want to make sure that we give them the tools that they need to succeed once they graduate from high school," he said. —WS