University of New Hampshire

UNH TODAY

Encouraging Young Women in Computing

New England high school women recognized for technological achievements

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Thirty-three young women will be recognized this spring for their accomplishments and aspirations in computing and technology. In an effort to encourage more young women to choose careers in technology, the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) and the University of New Hampshire at Manchester will recognize the 33 high school students at an event on March 31.

NCWIT is a coalition of over 650 universities, corporations and

organizations dedicated to increasing the meaningful participation of women in computing. The NCWIT Aspirations in Computing (AiC) Award encourages continued interest in computing, increases awareness of the gender gap in computing and IT, and emphasizes at a personal level the importance of women's participation in computing.

The NCWIT AiC Award recipients are selected for their computing and IT aptitude, leadership ability, academic history, and plans for post-secondary education.

Meera Kurup, a junior at Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua, N.H., received the 2017 AiC Award. Kurup learned about the program when she was searching for a computer programming internship. She said the AiC Award has had a tremendous impact on her life and future career goals.

"The award was definitely a confidence booster," said Kurup. "Since the award last year, I have completed a three-month software internship and was elected the programming lead at my school's FIRST robotics company. I was also able to start an AspireIT Code it! Girls program with $1,000 funding from NCWIT and support from the UNH STEM Lab."

Gunjan Choudhary, software development manager with Autodesk, has been a guest panelist at the AiC Award ceremony for the past two years. Choudhary chose to participate because, in talking with young women at other events to promote STEM, she has found that not many consider tech careers.

"When asked what their career aspirations were, I heard culinary, aesthetics, dog walking, and some aspired to be vets or doctors. Anything but tech," said Choudhary. "I want to do my part to support bringing awareness and confidence in girls that they can do equally well in computing and technology."

Autodesk, this year's AiC Award sponsor, understands and

recognizes the challenges that women face and how some of the fundamental norms of society need reform.

"As a tech company, Autodesk is working hard in different areas to empower women and encourage them to be part of the pipeline for technical career paths," said Choudhary.

The NCWIT AiC Award event will be held at UNH Manchester on Saturday, March 31 and will feature an industry panel of professional women in computing from Autodesk, Geneia, Dyn+Oracle, NCWIT and UNH Manchester.

All applicants were also considered for the National award.

The Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont area 2018 winners are:

Winners

- Meera Kurup, Bishop Guertin High School (also National Honorable Mention)

- Sonya DeLorie, Bow High School

- Alison Lambert, Bow High School

- Rose Speidel, Concord Senior High School

- Madeline McCallister, Exeter High School

- Natalie Zucco, Exeter High School

- Yajie Lou, Hanover High School

- Madeline Chairvolotti, Home school (also National Honorable Mention)

- Gloria Kelley (ME), Mt Desert Island High School (also National Honorable Mention)

- Julia Zhang, Nashua High School South

- McKenna Marquis, North Country Career Center

- Terryn Brunelle, Pelham High School (also National Honorable Mention)

- Jenny Yang, Phillips Exeter Academy

- Katherine Allan, Pinkerton Academy

- Hannah Alshech, Pinkerton Academy

- Sarah Jones, Pinkerton Academy

- Samara Holmes, Seacoast School of Technology

- Kristina McCarthy (ME), South Portland High School

- Leah DiPietro, The Founders Academy

- Sarah Fung, The Founders Academy

- Leah Marville, The Founders Academy

- Amanda Akker, Windham High School

- Tierney Dugan, Woodstock Sr. Uhsd #4

Honorable Mention

- Thaovy Le, Academy For Science And Design Charter School
- Marissa Bates, Baxter Academy for Technology and Science
- Brooke Parsons, Exeter High School
- Emily Murphy, Hanover High School
- Claire Yegian, Hanover High School
- Beth Newton, Laconia High School
- Hannah Dobson, Nashua High School North
- Michelyn Odei, Nashua High School North
- Madison Foster, Newmarket Jr.-sr. High School
- Avasha Khapre, Pinkerton Academy

Educator Award

- Raji Gupta, Windham High School

"This is such an impressive group of young women, and we are honored to be recognizing their achievements," said Emily Kerr, STEM Discovery Lab coordinator at UNH Manchester. "Not only have they already accomplished so much in the field of

computing, they have also been incredible leaders and role models in their schools, clubs and other organizations."

The NCWIT Aspirations in Computing program is supported by lifetime sponsor Apple and national sponsors AT&T, Bank of America, Bloomberg, Google, HP Enterprise, Intel, Qualcomm and Microsoft with additional support from Motorola Solutions Foundation, Northrop Grumman and Symantec.

The Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont affiliate of the NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing is a collaborative effort by dedicated volunteers from partner organizations and industry professionals.

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