Aspirations in Computing Award Ceremony
Tuesday, April 19, 2016  5:30 - 8:30pm
Vadnais Heights Commons
## Awards Program Highlights

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Evva Kraikul
Evva Kraikul serves as the Executive Director and Co-Founder of GLITCH. Evva is a neuroscientist turned social entrepreneur working at the intersection of art, technology, and philanthropy. With 5+ years of experience, she has worked alongside over 50 major technology and gaming industry partners such as Microsoft, Blizzard Entertainment, Riot Games, Logitech, and 3M to develop games, design programming, and launch initiatives.

Kate-Madonna Hindes
Kate-Madonna Hindes is an industry leader and nationally recognized analyst and keynote speaker on emotional integrity and authenticity in today’s online media. With 15+ years of combined experience in digital technology, trade publications and national government, Hindes is a regular contributor to news media and industry magazines. Notably, she sits on the coaching panel for Keith Ferrazzi’s Relationship Academy. Currently Hindes is a board member at MOI-MSP and The MARS GENERATION. Hindes is the founder of beenthererockedthat.org, an HPV education network.

“NCWIT is proud to recognize this outstanding group of technical young women and encourage them to pursue technology careers. With the Department of Labor predicting 1.4 million computing jobs in the U.S. workforce by 2020, it’s critical that we capitalize on this untapped talent pool and set these young women on the path to taking a seat at the technical design table.”

Lucy Sanders, CEO and Co-founder of NCWIT
MINNESOTA WINNERS

Sarah Abdon
Senior at MTS Minnesota Connections Academy, St. Paul

Sarah Abdon is a State award winner. She is a passionate and curious student who is determined to advocate for education and opportunities for students to engage in STEM. She is a member of her school’s FIRST Robotics team and leads the Brand Identity Department. Through FIRST Robotics, she has felt the impact science and engineering can have on students. She has also witnessed the gender disparity between women and science or engineering. Because of her experiences, she hopes to spread her excitement and passion for learning within STEM to girls and underrepresented students throughout her community. Alongside that, she is part of the National Science and Technology Academy of Connections Academy where she founded the first medical-based club. She is an avid volunteer and can be found volunteering as a Biology Teacher Assistant at her local high school or serving various hospital positions throughout the metro area. Her goal is to work in the field of Public Health because she is committed to lifelong learning and hopes to build schools throughout developing nations in order to promote that ideal. Sarah is committed to helping and connecting with others so she can gain a broader understanding of herself and the world.

Fatumastar Adan
Senior at Irondale High School, New Brighton

Fatumastar Adan is a State award winner currently doing PSEO at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. Being the youngest child of eight kids, she was always eager to have her voice be heard. Because of this, her future aspiration is to be the force that helps other women to be heard. Some of her proudest accomplishments are getting the opportunity to finish her AA degree while at the same time graduating from high school. Another accomplishment she is proud of is having been a part of the Genesys Work’s program. In the past, she never thought she would be involved in technology, but Genesys Works has blessed her with the power of having choices. She is now an intern at Target Corporation doing something many people her age don’t have the opportunity to do. Working as an intern at Target has opened her eyes to the world that is not only advancing but has achieved so much along the way. Day by day her interest in technology grows. In the future, she wants to incorporate technology with Public Health and Management to better women’s lives around the world.
Neehar Banerjee
Senior at Mayo High School, Rochester

Neehar Banerjee is a State award winner, passionate about a future in computer science and engineering. She self-taught herself Python and C++ in the eighth grade in order to create a more efficient automatic sprinkler system and has continued to self-study these languages since. Neehar is currently a National AP Scholar, an Intel STS Semifinalist, a Coca-Cola Scholar Regional Finalist, a Davidson Young Scholar, and a two-time GENIUS International Science Olympiad Silver Medalist. As a 2015 Research Science Institute (RSI) Scholar, Neehar conducted research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, where she learned MATLAB in one month and dedicated over 70 hours a week to computationally analyzing pollutant trends over Central America in the Atomic and Molecular Physics Department. Currently, Neehar is taking AP Computer Science, Multivariable & Vector Calculus, AP Physics 2, and AP Statistics. She is involved in several clubs and organizations at her school, including Science Olympiad, STEM Society, National Honors Society, Spanish National Honors Society, and Mayo Clinic Young Volunteers. Neehar also enjoys reading, writing, cooking, and baking in her spare time. In the future, she hopes to attend a university with a strong Computer Science program and pursue a career in this area.

Arunima Bhattacharya
Junior at Eagan High School, Eagan

Arunima Bhattacharya, a State award winner, has grown up with an ever-increasing interest in science, technology, and engineering. Arunima’s interests were initially sparked by her involvement in the FIRST robotics program, and to this day, the FIRST program has continued to help her grow and understand the depth of technology and engineering. Through this program, Arunima has been able to develop her understanding of programming, and is currently the lead of the Control Systems Sub team. Her interest in coding was further intensified when she took AP Computer Science in her sophomore year. Faced with problems to solve in class every day, Arunima was able to develop her logical-thinking skills, as well as a passion for the art of coding. This class not only increased her interest in the subject, but also allowed her to share her interest as she was provided with the opportunity to teach a summer coding camp for 9-12 year old girls. To take her interest in these fields further, Arunima plans to pursue a career in Biomedical Engineering or Bioinformatics.

“As we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence actually liberates others.”

Nelson Mandela
Taylor Del Vecchio
Senior at Eden Prairie High School, Eden Prairie

Taylor Del Vecchio, a State award winner, has taken several computer science and engineering classes at her high school and is currently enrolled in an AP Java course. She took her first introduction to computer science class in tenth grade and discovered that she really enjoyed coding. Though this is not what initially sparked her interest in web design, it is what prompted her to apply for Genesys Works, a program that connects high school seniors with the opportunity to earn a year-long internship in IT. Taylor attended the eight week summer training from June to August of 2015 and was excited to learn so much more about IT. She has been working for Genesys Works as a contractor at Cargill since the end of her training in August, and, though her official training is over, she is happy to be learning more and more each day in her internship. Taylor works as an intern in Global IT on the SharePoint team at Cargill Corporate in Hopkins, MN. In this internship she works to help people understand, manage, and utilize SharePoint in a way that is the most efficient for their team. Her future plans include attending a four-year university and earning a Bachelors’ Degree in Computer Science.

Isabella Jennings
Junior at Breck School, Golden Valley

Isabella Jennings, a State award winner, has fully immersed herself in the STEM curriculum at Breck. The accomplishment she is most proud of is the graduate-level research she undertook at the University of Minnesota, at the Minnesota Supercomputing Institute. There, she and a peer designed a novel drug candidate for HIV using Maestro molecular modeling software. They designed the drug candidate to cross the blood-brain barrier by attaching a synthetic cannabinoid to an FDA approved drug currently used for HIV management, and also targeted two receptors, as opposed to the more traditional one receptor approach. Isabella and her partner used the Institute’s Mesabi supercomputer to conduct simulations and identify the ideal measurements for the drug candidate. Because of this research, she was recognized as a Siemens Competition Regional Finalist. In addition to her research, Isabella is a second year member on her school’s FIRST robotics team and is responsible for training and guiding new members. She teaches rookies topics ranging from how to properly use power tools, to planning and coordinating, to teamwork and problem solving. After high school, Isabella plans to attend college, majoring in biomedical engineering.
Catherine Link
Junior at Convent of the Visitation School, St. Paul

Catherine Link, a State award winner, is passionate about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Since her freshman year, she has been very involved with her high school FRC team, where she enjoys programming in Java. Some of her favorite programming projects have included working on Swerve, a complex drive mode that allows a robot more maneuverability, and most recently, an autonomous routine that involves using vision processing to find a target and align the robot. Catherine has led her team as both a programming sub team captain and a team captain, and she has shared her programming knowledge with other FRC teams at an annual robotics workshop. She also planned and organized a STEM night and started an all-girls Lego robotics team at her former middle school, for which she earned her Gold Award in Girl Scouts—the highest award a Girl Scout can achieve. Besides robotics, Catherine enjoys running cross country, varsity track and field and participating in concert and marching band. For the past two years, she has participated in the All-Conference Honor Band. When Catherine attends college, she plans to major in engineering and is very interested in computer engineering.

Isabel Olson
Senior at Great River School, St. Paul

Isabel Olson is a State award winner and a National level runner-up; placing in the top 11 percent of approximately 3,100 applicants across the country. She is currently a senior at Great River School in St. Paul and will be graduating at the top of her class with an International Baccalaureate Diploma with a concentration in Physics. Isabel is also a Joyce Ivy Scholar for Women in Leadership, an Optimist Scholar and a national Quest Bridge Scholar. She received a scholarship to attend the Smith College Summer Engineering Program where she spent last summer working with a team of scientists in some of the top computer labs in the country. She built micro-controllers, learned Python, C1 and Java and discovered how powerful such a small piece of hardware can be when it comes to technology and addressing issues in our society. Isabel has a very diverse background and strong work ethic that she plans to use to make true, positive change in the world. She hopes to attend Stanford University in the fall and major in Product Design & Technology. She will be the first person in her family to attend college and wants to invent products that will help communities and people in poverty, live healthier and happier lives.
Alicia Purdum
Senior, Home School, Rosemount

Alicia Purdum is a State award winner, a 2014 Wisconsin state winner and a 2014 National runner-up. She has been working with computers and technology since the young age of ten. When Alicia was in seventh grade, she taught herself Objective-C and created a fully functional iOS application. Since then, she has been creating applications and computer programs rapidly. In the eighth grade, Alicia began working in robotics. She was the captain of the FIRST robotics league in her school, and she created a functional robotic arm by herself. Alicia began teaching a programming class to younger children, and runs a computer repair business called Bits and Bytes. Towards the end of ninth grade, Alicia began homeschooling so that she could learn at a faster pace. In tenth grade she took all Advanced Placement classes and now in eleventh grade, Alicia is set to graduate a year early. She plans to spend next year studying in South Korea with Rotary Youth Exchange. In the future, she would like to study Neuroscience and become a Psychiatrist.

Ariana (Ari) Pope
Senior at Osseo Senior High School, Osseo

Ariana (Ari) Pope, a State award winner, was not necessarily interested in technology five years ago. Her parents had other ideas though and encouraged her to join Black Data Processing Association (BDPA) in the eighth grade as a technology student. She would make the 45 minute trip to St. Paul every Saturday morning to take computer classes, where she originally was hesitant to develop and organize websites. Several years later, she has completed all three classes and competed in a National BDPA Conference. Ari now works as a lab assistant with BDPA and helps teach students how to program. She has learned many important values through BDPA, that she will carry with her throughout life, including the importance of diversity in backgrounds, gender and ethnicities in the technology industry. BDPA has also shown her the power of perseverance and given her the confidence to voice her opinion within her community. As a result, Ari has decided to volunteer more in her community and give back by encouraging and helping youth pursue a technical career. She plans to attend a university where she can pursue a degree in mechanical engineering and neurology and hopes to do research and create devices for the human brain.

“In the ‘School of Life’ events, situations, and the people you have attracted to be part of your personal experiences are synchronized perfectly in order to teach you the lessons that need to be learned. They show you exactly what is needed to be successful in your life.”

Jacqueline Ripstein
Ashmita Sarma  
Junior at Wayzata High School, Wayzata

Ashmita Sarma is a State award winner. She promotes STEM education as a youth ambassador for Greenlight for Girls, an international non-profit organization that is dedicated to encouraging young women to pursue STEM education. Over the summer she created a website for an organization that would host monthly workshops to inspire middle school students to pursue STEM related fields for the Codecademy Summer of Code Challenge. In college, Ashmita hopes to study Data Science or possibly Artificial Intelligence. Her interest in data science grew after learning about particle physics data analysis methods. She soon learned SQL and learned to use Python to analyze data. Ashmita also competed at the Business Professionals of America State Leadership Conference in the spring and won first place in Computer Programming Concepts and second place in SQL Database Fundamentals. She will be attending the National Leadership Conference in May. Ashmita also developed an interest in computer security when she began to compete in Capture the Flag (CTFs), ethical security hacking competitions, this year. Aside from her computing interests, she is a member of the Quiz Bowl Team, Science Bowl Team, Future Problem Solving Team and National Honor Society. She and her FPS team ranked in the top ten at the Future Problem Solving International Conference.

Atalanta Stoeke  
Sophomore at Apple Valley High School, Apple Valley

Atalanta Stoeke, is a State award winner and a 2015 State runner-up. She has been using computers since she was a toddler, but has only been taking them apart to figure out how they work since she was in the fifth grade. She has experience building computers from scratch, working with CAD, and has programmed with Java, LabVIEW, Robot C, JavaScript, HTML, jQuery and CSS. She is also the youngest person in her AP Computer Science class, and is taking a college-level computer class at Inver Hills Community College through her school’s STEM program. She is most proud of the fact that she is a founding member and programmer for the Iron Maidens FIRST Tech Challenge robotics team at Apple Valley High School (they are an all-girls team!). With her team, she has demonstrated for High Tech Kids and participated in more than 65 different STEM outreach events for a total of over 675 volunteer hours. She has also testified before the Minnesota Legislature on multiple occasions in support of STEM education. When Atalanta attends college, she plans to major in the computer and technology fields of artificial intelligence or computer forensics. She also plans on continuing to lobby in support of STEM education, especially for young girls, as well as play an active role in FTC robotics as a mentor.
**Yer Thao**  
Senior at Patrick Henry High School, Minneapolis

Yer Thao, a State award winner, is currently a senior at Patrick Henry High School and also a part time PSEO student at the University of Minnesota. She began studying computer networking in January 2015 and through her hard work and commitment, she successfully obtained her CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associates) in August, 2015. Yer is very proud and optimistic about this accomplishment and plans to continue her studies in networking to advance her career. She is currently an intern through Genesys Works, working as an IT assistant intern with the Hennepin County Public Defender’s office. Her responsibilities include making sure all discoveries sent to the Defenders are accurate and have no technical issues. Yer is enjoying her internship and grateful for the exposure that it has given her to many careers in the Technology field. Her future plans include pursuing a Bachelor’s degree at a university and eventually obtaining her Master’s degree in computer networking. She also plans to earn more Cisco certificates and hopes to inspire more young women to consider a career in the technology field.

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**Tracey Treat**  
Sophomore at Rosemount High School, Rosemount

Tracey Treat is a State award winner and a 2015 State runner-up. She has been able to pursue her interest in Computer Science through mentoring in CoderDojo with Scratch, AppInventor, Web Development, and Finch Robots. Last year, she and her partner were regional winners for the Technovation Challenge with their App, AbroadNet, which helps bridge the gap between foreign exchange and local students. Currently, Tracey continues to advance her knowledge and computer programming skills by attending classes such as HTML and CSS, Command Line and Git, outside of school. Each of these experiences contributed to one of her highlights from last year: being selected as a state runner up for the Aspirations in Computing award. As a result of this recognition, Tracey made connections with professionals and spent an amazing day doing a job shadow at Land O’ Lakes, where she witnessed firsthand the expectations of a professional work environment and observed the challenges of an innovative team. Tracey’s passion for the STEM field continues to motivate her to seek out new opportunities including workshops such as SPARCS and DigiGirlz. This year, she is excited to learn Java programming in her AP Computer Science class and knows without a doubt that she wants to pursue a career in the computer science field.
Elena Berman, a State award runner-up, had the opportunity to program an android application in eighth grade, which sparked her passion for programming. This experience motivated her to enroll in computer science at her school. She has taken every computer science course offered in the curriculum and is currently working on an independent study with the computer science teacher. Elena attended a hackathon event at the University of Michigan (MHacks), where she learned that hackathons are an amazing paradise for ambitious programmers, and enable unique and creative solutions to be developed. Since that event, Elena has discovered that hackathons are used to address all kinds of problems. Elena has also conducted research at VitreoRetinal Surgery to develop software to diagnose Alzheimer’s disease using retinal biomarkers. In her study, she worked with a partner to code software that first allows a user to measure retinal scans and then analyze the measurements to indicate the likelihood of Alzheimer’s disease. The diagnostic software they developed was 96% accurate in diagnosing Alzheimer’s in patients without ocular afflictions. In college, Elena plans to pursue computer programming and become involved in the hackathon community.

Alicia Zhang, a State award winner, began fostering her love for coding after entering high school and being inspired by her sister and friends. Watching programs successfully run for the first time or being able to hold a physical product made from code are exciting experiences that motivate Alicia to continue studying computer science. By taking multiple Project Lead the Way computing classes and navigating through accessible online portions of a Berkeley programming course, Alicia has tried to learn as much about coding as possible, and hopes to take AP Computer Science at her school next year. She was part of the FIRST Robotics team 3130 in her freshman year, and has been continuing to pursue her love for computing through a research project into Parkinson’s Disease and occasional app programming. Alicia is interested in many facets of programming and has learned an array of languages, from HTML to Python to variants of Computer Numerical Control, and is particularly fascinated by the field of cryptography and computer security. As a team captain, national qualifier, and state finalist in debate and an avid violinist, Alicia hopes to study computer science in college while utilizing programming to simplify and integrate other fields of study such as economics or sound recording.
Kayla Fink
Senior at Harding High School, St. Paul

Kayla Fink, a State award runner-up, is a senior at Harding High School and also attends college courses at Saint Paul College three days a week through PSEO. Aside from PSEO, Kayla is also an intern through the Genesys Works program at 3M in their IT department. Her internship responsibilities include running daily metrics, organizing data using Excel spreadsheets and databases and attending meetings. Kayla is assigned new projects and is exposed to new technology opportunities each day. She applies business and technology to the real world and gets firsthand experience of what it’s like to work in a Fortune 500 Company. Kayla had a rocky start going into high school and didn’t really care about her future. Through the support and encouragement of friends and family, she realized that her education and future were very important. Kayla is now earning almost straight A’s, and was accepted to five out of five colleges that she applied to. She plans to major in Business or Information Technology at the University of Wisconsin River Falls and will be a first generation college student in her family; an accomplishment she is very proud of.

Iman Geleto
Senior at Central High School, St. Paul

Iman Geleto, a State award runner-up, was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia where she lived with her parents until the age of 9. In late 2007, she migrated to the United States with her family, leaving behind her friends and relatives in hopes of seeking a better opportunity and education. Now, Iman is a very active participant in her community and school, where she participates in activities such as tutoring children, planning events at a community center and volunteering at places like the Science Museum. As the oldest in her family of six, Iman is an important role model to her younger siblings. In her free time, Iman, along with her close friend Naima, shares her love for spoken word at performances in local open mics and events at different colleges and universities. She’s currently an intern at Ameriprise Financial Center through the Genesys Works program where she hopes to improve her professional and technology skills. Iman also attends Metropolitan State University as a full time PSEO student while balancing high school at Central along the way. After graduation, she hopes to attend either the University of Minnesota or University of Saint Thomas to pursue a career in business or technology, specifically in the areas of finance and accounting.

“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.”

Maya Angelou
Jessica Hong
Senior at Edina High School, Edina

Jessica Hong is a State award runner-up. As a child, Jessica’s interest in programming was sparked when her mom brought home a game that taught her how to program mini-games. She loved being able to control the elements in the game and design anything she could imagine. This interest continued through high school where she took AP Computer Science. This class prompted her to explore programming in more of its applications. She joined her school’s FIRST robotics team in her junior year. Using Java to program the robot and to create a data collection program for scouting, she was able to learn more about the flexibility of computer science. Now, as a senior, she’s taken a teaching role where she helps first year members learn command based Java. With similar teaching roles, she also mentors a Junior FIRST Lego League team and teaches python to elementary school kids at CoderDojo Twin Cities. In addition to these activities, Jessica has worked at a bioinformatics lab at the University of Minnesota where she used Python and R to work on sequencing genomes in the gut microbiome. In the future, she hopes to explore cheminformatics and virtual reality through research in college, and eventually get an engineering or computer science degree.

Meghana Iyer
Junior at Edina High School, Edina

Meghana Iyer, a State award runner-up, is captain of her school’s Science Bowl team (which won 1st place at the 2016 Regional Contest and will travel to Washington, D.C. for the National competition), a scoring member on her school’s varsity math team, and a graduate of the University of Minnesota Talented Youth Math Program (UMTYMP). She has participated in her school’s FIRST Robotics program and is currently enrolled in AP Computer Science. Meghana has also enjoyed taking Project Lead the Way courses including Introduction to Engineering & Design, Technology & Video Production and Flight, Space, & Electronics. Meghana learned to use iMovie and FinalCutPro on her own to make documentaries for National History Day. To date, Meghana is proudest of her involvement in a research project at the University of Minnesota’s Masonic Cancer Research Center. She learned advanced characterization techniques such as qRT-PCR and immunofluorescence staining and microscopy to investigate ways to most efficiently differentiate stem cells into lung epithelial cells that can be used for therapeutic purposes. Meghana really enjoys biology, mathematics and technology and is considering pursuing a degree in computational biology in college.
Archana Murali  
Junior at Breck School, Golden Valley

Archana Murali, a State award runner-up, enjoys reading, playing tennis, and golfing. Her favorite subjects are math and science. Her interest in computer programming was sparked by a research project she conducted, where she and a partner teamed up to understand Alzheimer’s disease and its effect on the eye. Specifically, their research focused on three biomarkers that they identified to be significant indicators in diagnosing Alzheimer’s disease. Archana not only taught herself the Python programming language, but then used it to develop a program that measures retinal scans and diagnostic software that will enable ophthalmologists or ophthalmology technicians to determine the range of the three biomarkers in scans done during routine eye exams. Tests of the diagnostic software show that it is 96% accurate in identifying signs of Alzheimer’s disease. Archana considers this to be her greatest technical accomplishment. Outside of her research, Archana has learned Adobe Photoshop and enjoys editing photos and making flyers at her school. She also started a Computer Programming Club and is a member of her school’s FIRST Robotics Team. Archana plans to attend college in the future to pursue a career in the Biomedical Sciences.

Rachel Lauer  
Junior at Buffalo High School, Buffalo

Rachel Lauer, a State award runner-up, first realized her passion for technology and engineering as a freshman in high school when she built “Rob” the robot. Later that year, Rachel built a second robot, this time using an Arduino microcontroller to build a small wheeled robot. As a sophomore, Rachel joined her school’s FIRST Robotics Team, RoboHerd, during its inaugural year. To her great delight, she found a place where her enthusiasm for robotics intermixed with a social aspect, an opportunity to build a robot with other students, and the chance to learn from experienced mentors. She is currently participating in her third year in Knowledge Bowl and is serving as co-captain to the robotics team for its second season. Rachel has become an advocate for both programs by visiting students in classrooms to talk about each program and encourage students to join. Continuing to further her knowledge in hobby electronics, Rachel has recently taken on the challenge of building her own 3D printer. She plans to attend a university where she will major in either robotics engineering, with the intention of designing mobile robots for disaster relief or space exploration, or biomedical engineering with a sub-focus on biomechatronics, where she may someday be designing prosthetic limbs.
Mariel Naylor
Junior at Wayzata High School, Wayzata

Mariel Naylor, a State award runner-up, is Captain of her robotics team and President of Business Professionals of America (BPA) at her school. She joined the robotics team her freshman year of school and took a C++ programming class her sophomore year. Prior to the class, she knew little about programming, but this class opened the door to programming for her, and showed her how much she enjoys it. This year she has taken an AP Computer Science course and has also switched to the programming team in robotics. She is also a mentor on the robotics team, teaching technology to students in the middle school. In a BPA programming competition, she placed third nationally for her RSS reader for her mobile applications event. Mariel has become an advocate for females in both robotics and BPA and is happy to report that, due in part to her efforts, there is now a good mix of both male and female members in each organization. Mariel enjoys attending hackathons such as Codeday, and plans on attending college to double major in Computer Science and Mathematics.

Hannah Quarnstrom
Senior at North Lakes Academy, Forest Lake

Hannah Quarnstrom, a State award runner-up, is a senior at North Lakes Academy Charter School where she is a member of the trap shooting team, the manager of the volleyball team, and the captain of the robotics team. In her free time she likes to quilt and knit. As the captain of the robotics team, she has gained a love for leadership, science, and technology. When Hannah started at North Lakes her freshmen year, the school did not have a robotics team so she worked with a teacher advisor to form a team and helped develop it into what it is today. As a result of being a part of the robotics team, she has learned so much about the engineering process and how things are built. She also learned how to operate power tools and how to program robots and has found the experience to be very fun and life changing. Robotics and the team have brought out Hannah’s love of science and helped her gain valuable leadership skills, all of which she will use as she follows her passions and works toward her goals. Next fall, Hannah will be attending the University of Minnesota, Rochester, where she will be working towards her Bachelor of Science degree in health science.

“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”
Albert Einstein
Abigail (Abby) Rechkin
Senior at Eden Prairie High School, Eden Prairie

Abigail (Abby) Rechkin, a State award runner-up, is a leader in the Teen Tech Squad at her local library. Here, she plans, sets up, and leads STEAM themed workshops for younger students. Abby really enjoys sharing her passion of science, math, and technology with others. In 2013, she attended the Grace Hopper Women in Computing convention in Minneapolis as one of forty female high school representatives. This was one of her favorite computer science experiences and inspired her to encourage younger students to engage in STEM. Outside of technology, Abby is heavily involved in synchronized swimming. She has been swimming for the Minnesota Aquafins Club for six years, has been part of her high school’s varsity team for four years, and is a captain of the varsity team this year. She also is the president and founder of the Film Photography Club, in which she teaches students about film photography technology. Abby also participates in Math Team, Science Olympiad, and the National Honor Society. She continues to strengthen her technology foundation by taking advanced classes and plans to attend college on the east coast to study engineering and hopefully study abroad in the near future.

Sumayo Saed
Senior at Step Academy Charter School, Inver Grove Heights

Sumayo Saed, a State award runner-up, is currently a senior at STEP Academy and also a PSEO student at Minneapolis Community Technical College. Sumayo is working as an intern through the Genesys Works program at Mortenson Construction in Golden Valley, on the Client Devices team in IT. She first learned how to image a computer at the beginning of her internship and is now responsible for all desktop computer imaging and deployments within the company. As her knowledge of technology grew, she realized she enjoyed it and wanted to learn more so began researching programming and networking. Sumayo recently shared her expertise by helping her schools’ IT department reimage over 400 desktop computers in one month. She is a driven young woman with goals and aspirations to help others and influence change. Her mom is her hero and has instilled many values in her, of which Sumayo plans to use in everything she does in life. She plans to pursue a career in networking or computer science and hopes to travel to Somalia one day and teach technology to under privileged girls.
Sierra Schultz
Senior at Minnetonka High School, Minnetonka

Sierra Schultz, a State award runner-up, has been curious about computers and their immense capabilities from a young age. From her first computer game to the app she spent months building last year, Sierra’s pursuit of knowledge in technology has always been a major part of her life. She spent last summer as a student intern in the Minnetonka Public Schools technology department, assisting with projects such as reinstalling access points and reimaging hundreds of laptops and computers. Her greatest technical accomplishment is the app that she and her team built last year for the Technovation competition. They used MIT App Inventor to build an app that connects people in need with homeless and food shelters nearest to them. Her team won the Best Technical App award. Sierra is currently a student researcher at the Center for Magnetic Resonance Research at the University of Minnesota, using MATLAB and SPM to analyze gray matter concentrations in Ataxia patients. Next year she plans to attend the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, to major in computer science and a possible minor in neuroscience. In the future, she hopes to work in a field that allows her to focus on programming, while also being involved in neuroscience.

Shreya Shankar
Senior at Rosemount High School, Rosemount

Shreya Shankar is a State award runner-up. One of her major passions is coding and innovating technology. Her love for computer science started after a three month coding introduction class. She discovered that she loved to problem solve and work with others. In the future, Shreya hopes to spread her knowledge to other kids around the world and help technology continue to advance. Over the past two years, Shreya has worked on various teams to solve and create projects. Through this work, she has learned that the most important parts of development are organization, collaboration and hard work. Shreya has also attended many computer science workshops through the year and expanded her knowledge on real world coding. Her problem solving passion instigates her interest in math, which has, in turn, boosted her understanding of code. Next year, Shreya plans to attend Texas A&M University to double major in Math and Computer Science. This summer, she plans on developing more projects to keep her coding skills sharp and also explore new areas.
Charlotte Thomasson  
Senior at Minnetonka High School, Minnetonka

Charlotte Thomasson, a State award runner up, has been very involved in technology over the past few years. Her interest in technology began when a favorite teacher encouraged coding and computer sciences in class. As a junior, she was a founding member of her school’s Student Technology Help Desk, a panel of students committed to helping peers resolve technology issues, especially problems with school-issued iPads. Last year, Charlotte and a team from Minnetonka High School competed in Technovation. The team was awarded Best Technical App at Appapalooza in Minneapolis. She has also been involved in her school’s computer programming club for the past two years and volunteers at an elementary school coding class. Last summer, Charlotte interned with Minnetonka School District’s technology department where she assisted the staff in getting technology ready for the new school year. This included hanging wifi access points, imaging computers, replacing faulty parts, and setting up classrooms. Charlotte is knowledgeable in Java, Swift, and HTML. In the future, Charlotte would like to go to college for physics and computer science and plans to make custom programs to model business data.

Anna Wise  
Junior at Rosemount High School, Rosemount

Anna Wise is a State runner-up and a leader in academics, athletics and the arts. Over the past four years, she and a like-minded group of friends have blended technology, social media and sports together creatively. The group has successfully launched events including swim-a-thons and color runs. They have designed websites and used social media to raise awareness and funds for Muscular Dystrophy research and configured reservation systems to make the process more efficient. Their momentum has built over the four years, generating over $70,000 towards finding a cure, while gaining national and international recognition in competitions sponsored by Destination Imagination, DECA and MDA. Anna is also a 2016 recipient of the MN State High School League’s ExCEL award, which recognizes high school juniors for their excellence in community, education and leadership. In addition, Anna is a captain of her high school Math team, chapter officer of DECA, active in National and French Honor Societies, an academic all-state, and a varsity athlete in track and field, and volleyball. Anna will continue to build on her foundation of AP math and science classes in her senior year, as she prepares for college and a future career in medical and genetic research.
Thomas J. Reinartz, Jr.
Teacher at Rosemount High School

After earning a French degree in college, Tom led cross country adventure camping trips throughout North America for French tourists. Today, he has a PhD in Instructional Technology from the University of Minnesota, and has been teaching for a long time, including instructional technology courses at the University of Minnesota and 21 years at Rosemount High School, with most of those years spent teaching literature and journalism. For the past 7 years he has taught both English and computer science at Rosemount High School. This year, due to the growth in Rosemount’s computer science program, he teaches all computer science courses including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Computer Science Principles, and an Advanced Data Structures course for students interested in computer science beyond the AP course.

The Rosemount High School computer science program has gained considerable momentum since Tom began teaching it 7 years ago with 6 students. Today, Rosemount offers three levels of computer science including an Advanced Data Structures course with app development using tablet computers purchased by a grant from Education Minnesota Foundation. Tom has led efforts to continue to grow the program, and there are more than 180 students registered for next year’s courses and an even more diverse student population including approximately 30% female students registered for one of three different courses offered. Tom has received a teacher of the month award from Code.org, serves as vice president of the Minnesota chapter of CSTA, and resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Special Thanks to our Educator Endorsers

The following people provided support and endorsement to one or more of the selected award honorees. On behalf of the National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT), the Minnesota Aspirations in Computing Award Committee, the honorees and their families, we wish to acknowledge and express our appreciation for their youth development support.

Stephanie Becker, MTS Minnesota Connections Academy
Sarah Hatalla, Irondale High School
Meghan Peterson, Mayo High School, Rochester
Shannon Braun, Eagan High School
Rachel Schmidt, Eden Prairie High School
Ann Feitl, Convent of the Visitation School
Melanie Peterson-Nafziger, Great River School
John Hayden, Genesys Works - Twin Cities
Carin Kirk, Community Supporter
Jim Lynch, Apple Valley High School
Marit Aaseng, College Possible
Jessica Zehavi, Clockwork
Donald Winston, East Ridge High School, Woodbury

Lois Fruen, Breck School, Golden Valley
Erika Huss, Harding Senior High School, St. Paul
Lindsey King, Genesys Works - Twin Cities
Maria Gini, University of Minnesota
Nancy Johnson, Edina High School
Kristin Krone, Maverick Software Consulting
Tika Kude, Wayzata High School
Paul Good, North Lakes Academy, Forest Lake
Jennifer Nelson, Eden Prairie High School
Kaela Worrall, Genesys Works - Twin Cities
Carol Gryzbowski, Minnetonka High School
Thomas Reinartz, Rosemount High School
Farrah Jennings, Minnetonka High School
Thank You Aspirations in Computing Award Sponsors and Partners for Your Generous Support!

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GRAND PRIZE: Summer Internships

This is the fourth year the awards program has offered an internship as a Grand Prize. This year we are thrilled that eight companies/organizations will be offering an honoree a summer paid internship. All honorees have a chance to select internships they are interested in, and they will be interviewed by one or more of the company internship providers. All interested honorees get the real world experience of an interview for a career level position. Eight of them will be selected to experience working in a technology related job for the summer. This year we extend our sincere appreciation to the following internship providers:

- Help Systems
- Pearson Vue
- Hennepin County
- SPS Commerce
- Land O’ Lakes, Inc.
- STEM Fuse
- PeopleNet
- Veritas Technologies, LLC

MnSCU Scholarships

This year’s program features a $4,000 scholarship to Century College and a $4,000 scholarship to St. Cloud University, higher education institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU). Minnesota is nationally recognized as a high quality education state, as well as a state possessing excellent employers, contributing to a vibrant Minnesota economy. This is especially the case, in the rapidly growing areas of technology products and services. We’re grateful to Maverick Software Consulting, STEM Fuse, Century College Foundation and SUPERVALU for teaming up to provide these scholarship opportunities. Their generous contributions establish the foundation to address scholarship needs for the years to come, to support honorees and their families.
Congratulations Ladies!

Logic PD congratulates the 30 talented young women being recognized at the Minnesota Aspirations for Women in Computing Awards. As a proud sponsor of this program and leader in the technology industry, Logic PD fully supports the development and success of women in IT, engineering and other technical fields.

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AWC
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As you continue to challenge yourself know that we are here to help you succeed!

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Generating SPARCS…

The year-round SPARCS program is all about…Sustaining Passion, Ambition, and Resolve for Career Success. Partner support of the Minnesota Aspirations in Computing Awards Program permits hundreds of middle and high school girls to explore new technology, discover what working in the field is really like, be mentored by technical women, and meet new friends who share a fascination for computing-related fun and learning. In the past year, the following companies and organizations have demonstrated their commitment to SPARCS participants.

WE SINCERELY THANK YOU!

Brocade – Plymouth
Code Savvy – Twin Cities
General Mills – Golden Valley
Girls in Tech – Twin Cities
Macalester College – St. Paul

Metropolitan State University – St. Paul
Microsoft – Edina
Salesforce – Bloomington
Unisys – Eagan

2016 Minnesota Aspirations in Computing Award Committee Members

Katie Bedney, Twin Cities Chapter of the Association of Women in Computing
Russell Fraenkel, Advance IT Minnesota
Anna Grecco, Thomson Reuters
Kristin Krone, Maverick Software Consulting
Leatha Lemmer, Metropolitan State University - Institute for Professional Development
Karen Martin, Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA)
Betsey Roush, Unisys Corporation
Devan Sayles, General Mills
Julie Urban, Veritas
Kris Wilmunen, Unisys Corporation
Advance IT Minnesota, a Center of Excellence within the Minnesota State College and Universities (MnSCU) system, in partnership with Metropolitan State University, is grateful to the numerous collaborators who have contributed financial, human, business, technology, printing, communications and other professional resources and services.

- The committee members noted on the previous page are deserving of our full appreciation. They led efforts to generate and review award applications, gather critical information from honorees, recruit partners, plan the ceremony, set-up summer internships, job shadow experiences and scholarships…and, pay the bills.

- Special thanks to the National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) for their professional expertise, national infrastructure/network, and their visionary leadership. We’re especially grateful to regional affiliate manager, Yolanda Smith Charles.

- Our sincere appreciation to Champion Partner Logic PD, and Pillar Partners, Land O’Lakes, Maverick Software Consulting, SPS Commerce, STEM Fuse, and Veritas for your generous financial contributions to Aspirations and SPARCS. The funding goes a long way to helping to build sustainable year-round programming.

- Girls in Tech – Twin Cities, thank you for sharing the talk-show talent of Pallavi Sharma for a video shoot on April 12 at Logic PD. The interview material, along with the video capture of tonight’s program (by Brian Bratt Creative and InHouse Media) will be provided as a memento to the award winners and families.

- Nicely done…Unisys for your donated print services and Kindem Design for your graphic artistry.

- Katie Bedney and the Twin Cities Chapter of the Association of Women in Computing, please accept our sincere gratitude for your fiscal service support of Aspirations, AspireIT and SPARCS. And, your generous financial contribution as well.

- Thank you Kate-Madonna Hindes and Evva Kraikul for your pro bono support of the ceremony. What great role models you are!

- To our audience of sponsors, partners, parents, educators, special guests, volunteers, and others for your show of support by participating in tonight’s recognition event — THANK YOU!

- Lastly, to our honorees — none of this happens without your commitment to learning. We’re proud of you and wish you continued success on your exciting path to a fulfilling career.