

STEM OUTREACH SUCCESS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL SECTION

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The National Capital Section (NCS), AIAA's largest with nearly 3,000 members, undertakes a multifaceted effort to recognize outstanding STEM educators and students across the Washington metropolitan area. Each year, the NCS funds 8 regional science fairs for middle and high school students in Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia with support from AIAA corporate member sponsors, and recruits 26 volunteer judges from NCS membership. Winning aerospace-related projects are recognized with certificates and free student membership in AIAA, monetary awards for second and third place winners, and first place winners receive a full scholarship to a week-long stay at Space Camp. Space Camp, located in Huntsville, AL, offers students a stimulating hands-on approach to study not available in the typical classroom setting. Corporate partners in the 2012 science fair scholarship program were Lockheed Martin and Honeywell International.

The impact of the NCS science fair programs on students can't be overstated, setting many young people on a course of study in aerospace that can last a lifetime. Among the many thank you letters received by the NCS from students are these words from 2012 first-place honoree Rachel Vogler, an 11th grade student from Loudoun County, VA, "I would like to express my gratitude for the Space Camp scholarship that your association awarded me...I attended the camp last week and I can honestly say that it was one of the best experiences of my life. Space Camp opened up the world of aerospace to me, and had it not been for your scholarship, I would not be compelled to study it more deeply.... thank you for the life changing opportunity."

Students are not the only participants to come away inspired. NCS member and volunteer judge Dr. Thomas Snitch remarked, "I was a judge at the Washington DC fair. We had participation by students who were living under difficult circumstances and, despite the challenges, these young people were able to construct scientifically respectable projects. While these students may have lacked financial resources, they were able to use ingenuity, help from great teachers and sheer willpower to examine tough issues. These students are absolutely inspiring."

The NCS also sponsors the AIAA NCS Educator of the Year Awards, recognizing three outstanding STEM educators who currently teach at the elementary, middle, and high school levels within the jurisdiction of the Section. This year's honorees were Charles Sabatier of Mount Vernon High School in



2012 NCS Science Fair Winners, with NCS Chair Bruce Milam and Science Fair Committee Chair Dr. Natalia Sizov.

Virginia, Elizabeth Butler of Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Maryland, and Kareen Lazzar, of J.C. Nalle Elementary in Washington, DC.

The annual NCS Honors and Awards Banquet, held each June, is the centerpiece of many months of dedicated education outreach efforts undertaken by the Section, and the highlight of the year for the NCS Council, who take great pride in nurturing and inspiring the talented educators, students, and young professionals who will light the way forward for the aerospace industry. The students' winning projects are shared during a pre-dinner reception and the student and educator honorees receive their awards. Also numbered among this year's honorees were the Hal Andrews Young Engineer of the Year (Dr. Moble Benedict of the University of Maryland) and the NCS Engineer/Scientist of the year (Kai Harth of Aurora Flight Sciences). This awards program is headed up by Professor Norman Wereley, NCS Honors and Awards Committee Chair. The keynote speaker was Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction and Deputy Administrator for NOAA. Dr. Sullivan, who also currently serves as NOAA's acting chief scientist, a renowned astronaut and intrepid explorer, held the audience in rapt attention as she shared the motivating influences, trials, and inspirations of her professional journey from her youngest years onward.

If you would like to help support the 2012–2013 NCS Science Fairs, please contact Michele McMurrer at aiaancs1@aol.com.



Third place winner Shubham Patil, a freshman at Stone Bridge High School, discusses his work with longtime NCS Science Fair team member Dr. Nils Jespersen and his wife Beth Jespersen at the 2012 Honors and Awards Banquet.



Kareen Lazzar (left), teacher of mathematics at JC Nalle Elementary School, Washington, DC, one of the 2012 NCS Educators of the Year. Shown with JC Nalle principal Kim Burke and NCS Education Outreach Chair Michel Santos.