

16th Annual

# WOMEN OF INNOVATION<sup>®</sup>



$$i\hbar \frac{\partial}{\partial t} |\psi(t)\rangle = \hat{H} |\psi(t)\rangle$$
$$a_0 = \frac{4\pi\epsilon_0 \hbar^2}{m_e \sigma^2}$$
$$\Psi(x, t) = \int f(k) e^{i(kx - \omega t)} dk \quad \text{mit}$$

$$\hat{H} |\psi_n(t)\rangle = \hbar \frac{\partial}{\partial t} |\psi_n(t)\rangle$$
$$\Psi(x_1, x_2, \dots)$$

$$\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} = \frac{iE}{\hbar} A e^{i(\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{r} - Et)/\hbar} = \frac{iE}{\hbar} \Psi$$



Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020





COMMITTED TO  
**TECHNOLOGY  
AND INNOVATION**

Congratulations  
Connecticut Technology  
Council's Women of  
Innovation™\* finalists

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16th Annual

# WOMEN OF INNOVATION®

## WELCOME!

2020 has been a year like no other. Through it all, and perhaps as never before, the significance and impact of the STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and math – in each of our daily lives has been unmistakable and ubiquitous.

The Connecticut Technology Council and the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology are proud to collaborate to present the 2020 Women of Innovation® Awards, for the first time in a digital format.

Now in its 16th year, the annual Women of Innovation® program recognizes women innovators, role models, and leaders in science and technology professions, including outstanding young women at the high school and collegiate level pursuing technology studies.

Through the years, a vibrant and expanding network that now numbers more than 750 women has evolved, extending and reaffirming the significant contributions of each year's honorees. We proudly spotlight these outstanding women who are strengthening Connecticut's future in STEM and paving the way for tomorrow's breakthroughs.

The work they pursue, leadership they provide, and innovation they produce is plainly evident in the extraordinary caliber of the 50 finalists, selected earlier this year from more than three times that number of well-qualified nominees.

Across all ten categories, an unsurpassed commitment to excellence is a common thread. All nominees had to meet qualifying requirements in addition to those specific to the awards for which they were nominated: currently working or studying in the State of Connecticut, demonstrating strong leadership abilities, and serving (or previously served) as a mentor in some capacity – short- or long-term, life mentor, career mentor, or peer mentor.

The award winners have been selected from among the finalists in ten Innovation & Leadership categories: Youth, Collegian, Secondary Academic, Postsecondary Academic, Research, Community, Entrepreneurial, Small Business, Medium Business and Large Business. An award is also presented for Inspiring STEM Equitability, promoting equality and diversity in STEM.

We invite you to visit the Women of Innovation 2020 website ([ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)), learn more about the 50 finalists, hear from them directly, and experience the pace-setting diligence they bring to their endeavors. And we thank you for helping us to recognize the contributions of impressive STEM professionals across business and industry, joined by young women at the threshold of their careers.

Connecticut's future rests in resilient and reliable hands, as Women of Innovation lead us forward.

16th Annual

# WOMEN OF INNOVATION®



Connecticut Center for  
Advanced Technology, Inc.

## ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT CENTER FOR ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

The Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology Inc. (CCAT) validates, demonstrates, and encourages the adoption of leading-edge technologies into global industrial companies and the advanced manufacturing supply chain, while also providing the training and education necessary to utilize the capability of these advancements and drive efficiency. CCAT, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, assists businesses in executing their continuous improvement strategies and collaborates with state, regional, and national partners in manufacturing, academia, government, and non-profit organizations in order to define and strengthen the future of the supply chain in the areas of advanced manufacturing, incumbent worker training, STEM awareness, and energy solutions. Learn more at [www.ccat.us](http://www.ccat.us)



## ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

The Connecticut Technology Council is a statewide association of technology-oriented companies and institutions, providing leadership in areas of policy advocacy, community building, and support for growing companies. The mission of the Connecticut Technology Council is to spark innovation, cultivate tech talent, foster business growth, advocate for

industry-beneficial law and policy, expand the scope of industry networking and professional development, and celebrate industry achievements in the state. CTC seeks to serve Connecticut's technology ecosystem by providing leadership, support, mentoring, and advocacy to companies across every industry and at every stage of growth. For more information, visit [www.ct.org](http://www.ct.org)



## ABOUT CT NEXT

CTNext evolved from the desire to help innovative entrepreneurs succeed in Connecticut, in two ways: by providing direct assistance in terms of capital, mentorship, networking, and skills development; and by serving as a catalyst in the evolution of an "innovation ecosystem" – a community of entrepreneurs and a network of resources, programs, and institutions working together to help that community expand and succeed. CTNext has an array of programs and resources that can help you if you're just beginning to transform your idea into reality, or if you're ready to grow and need resources, or if you are positioned to scale your business to the next level and beyond. To learn more about CTNext and Connecticut's current innovation ecosystem, visit [ctnext.com](http://ctnext.com)



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## 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WOMEN OF INNOVATION AWARDS EMCEE

### SARAH CODY | NEWS 8

For twenty years, Sarah has been sharing stories about interesting places and inspiring people throughout Connecticut. At WTNH News 8, she spearheads the Connecticut Families segment, as well as 8 Things To Do This Weekend.

At WTIC-TV in Hartford, she produced and hosted the popular Mommy Minute and DayTrippers segments, in addition to covering breaking news events, such as 9/11 and the Michael Skakel Trial.

She also spearheaded an Arts and Entertainment series, enabling her to interview celebrities such as Jon Bon Jovi, Kid Rock, Jewel, Jessica Simpson, Julie Andrews and Martin Short.

Often tapping into her own experiences, Sarah wrote a parenting column for the Hartford Courant. Additionally, she contributed home and travel features to Hartford Magazine.

After graduating from Trinity College in Hartford, Sarah began her media career at WHDH in Boston where she was an Assignment Editor, Satellite Producer, and Field Producer.

She has received a Food Allergy Hero Award, a Mental Health Media Award and a Local Leader-Local Legend Unsung Hero Award for her dedication to important family issues. Sarah is also the proud recipient of three Emmy Awards.



Sarah enjoys contributing to local events with organizations such as March of Dimes, Hartford Hospital and the YMCA of Greater Hartford. Dancing the rhumba in a recent Donate Life Connecticut competition is one of Sarah's proudest accomplishments.

She lives on Connecticut's gorgeous shoreline and enjoys combing the beaches with her husband Paul, sons Sam and Ben, and rescue dog, Lucy.

You can also find Sarah snapping a picture or reading a book. But, her favorite hobbies will always be swimming, skiing or playing ping pong with the kids!

# The future of innovation

Raytheon Technologies congratulates the Connecticut Technology Council's Women of Innovation® honorees for the challenges they've overcome, the solutions they've built and the critical role they play in inspiring — and empowering — tomorrow's female leaders.



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# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY: Youth Innovation & Leadership**



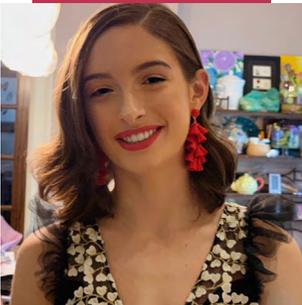
**ANANYA AGGARWAL** *Student, Glastonbury High School*

Ananya is pursuing her passion for research and working on her third project at the University of Connecticut. She won 3rd place in the CSEF science fair for two consecutive years and organized a local educational walk on invasive species for Glastonbury citizens last May. She is president of her school's Key Club and Science Olympiad, captain of the Chemistry Olympiad, and a National Merit Scholar.



**MINA KIM** *Student, Amity Regional High School*

Mina is currently studying to become an engineer. In middle school, she developed a passion for science and dedicated time to science research. This allowed her to explore the different branches of science including environmental science, biomedical engineering, and internal medicine. In the community, Mina mentors younger students in STEM and volunteers at a community called Kkottongnae, which shelters and treats homeless people in Haiti.



**LOLA KOVALSKI** *Student, Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy*

Lola is as passionate about technology as she is with its implications on economic equality. To date, she has taught over one hundred female students from Hartford how to code through her non-profit ITgirl, testified on behalf of transformative educational bills, and helped to expand Girls Who Code clubs throughout the city of Hartford. She looks forward to continuing her advocacy work at Williams College.



**AUDREY LARSON** *Student, Wallingford Public Schools*

Audrey has been inventing since 4th grade. She has patents pending which solve problems in the areas of climate change and school safety. She serves on the Wallingford STEM Town Committee and the Connecticut Invention Convention Board of Directors. Audrey is passionate about engineering and introducing young kids to STEM. She mentors children in music, plays the tuba, and is in the STEM and Environmental clubs at her school.

Learn more about the finalists at [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY: Youth Innovation & Leadership** *(continued)*



**MEGHAN OGRINZ** *Student, Joel Barlow High School*

Meghan is driven to protect nature through research and innovation. She is a board member of Maker Faire Connecticut and co-captain of Barlow's Sikorsky engineering team. She has volunteered 150+ hours at Norwalk Maritime Aquarium and is a PADI Advanced Open Water Diver trained in reef restoration. Meghan is designing 3D printable coral nursery structures and researching the ability of mucus to trap micropollutants. Meghan will pursue biomedical engineering and computer science studies.



**SOPHIA WANG** *Student, Amity Regional High School*

Sophia is currently an undergraduate at MIT and is passionate about combining innovative engineering with effective public policy. For the past four years, she created sinkhole detection systems for at-risk communities and researched at Yale University and Columbia University. In her community, Sophia serves as a mentor for students in STEM, a youth volunteer leader at the Yale New Haven Hospital, and an intern at her local fire department.



**MELISSA WOO** *Student, Greenwich High School*

Melissa's research investigates smartphone-based quantitative detection of melanoma through analysis of thermal regeneration. She is dedicated to helping others through her nonprofit, STEM For All, where she teaches local computer programming classes, and Girls with Impact, where she mentors girls interested in entrepreneurship. At school, Melissa is the president of Girls Who Code and the Economics Club.

## **CATEGORY: Collegian Innovation & Leadership**



**LEILA DANESHMANDI** *PhD Candidate, UConn School of Engineering*

Leila is a student entrepreneur, young leader, and aspiring university professor. Her cancer-battling start-up, located in Farmington, was recently awarded the prestigious "Technology-in-Space Prize" for \$750k from The International Space Station U.S. National Laboratory partnered with Boeing. Her doctoral studies focus on developing materials that promote bone regeneration. She has over ten academic publications and five patents and serves as a mentor for the next generation of health-tech entrepreneurs.

# THE FINALISTS



**WANJIKU (WAWA) GATHERU** *Student, University of Connecticut*

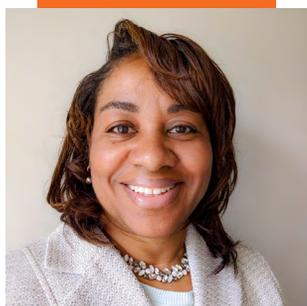
Wanjiku is an environmental justice advocate passionate about creating a more inclusive environmental movement. The proud daughter of Kenyan immigrants, she is a recent graduate from the University of Connecticut. In 2020, she became the first Black person in American history to receive the Truman, Udall and Rhodes Scholarships. At University of Oxford, she aspires to continue her studies at the intersections of critical race theory, environmental policy, and traditional knowledge systems.



**MAYA GERADI** *Student, Yale University*

Maya is a rising junior at Yale University. She conducted chemistry research throughout high school and was recognized as a 3-time ISEF finalist and Gerber Medal of Excellence recipient. Maya is currently co-chair judge of the USC category at CSEF. She reports for the SciTech column of the Yale Daily News, is involved in science outreach programs and is a co-founder of Ambrosia, an early-stage nutritionally-tailored platform for promoting healthier eating.

## **CATEGORY: Secondary Academic Innovation & Leadership**



**KAREN AMAKER** *Founding Director, P-TECH Norwalk*

Karen is the founding director of P-TECH Norwalk, Connecticut's first 9-14 high school. In her 25 years as an educator, Karen has served as a school counselor, department chair, and middle and high school administrator. As a transformational school leader, Karen purposefully disrupts fixed systems to provide equitable access to STEM education and employment. Karen is a former Urban School Leaders Fellow and Relay Graduate School of Education Fellow.



**SUSAN DOUGHERTY** *STEM and Special Education Teacher, Stamford High School*

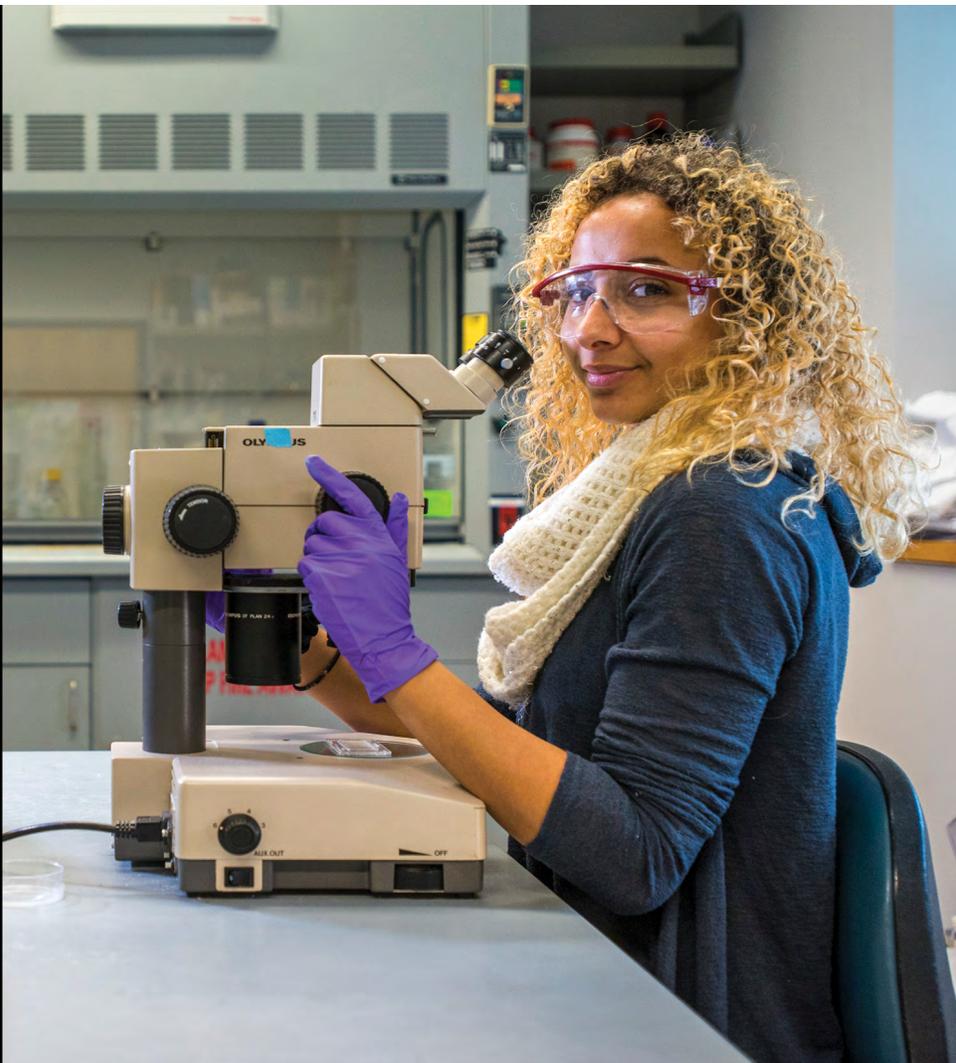
Susan has taught for 28 years and instructs students in various levels of chemistry, physics, and Earth and Space science while serving as Student Spaceflight Experiments Program Director for Missions 12 and 14. Dedicated to the growth of young women and students from underserved communities in science competitions, Susan has facilitated students in sending experiments to the ISS and earning recognition at GLOBE Regional Science Symposia. She holds a BA in Economics from Iona College and a Master of Science from City College, CUNY.

# INNOVATION FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

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congratulates CT Tech Council's 2020  
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**Breakthroughs that change patients' lives**



# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Secondary Academic Innovation & Leadership *(continued)*



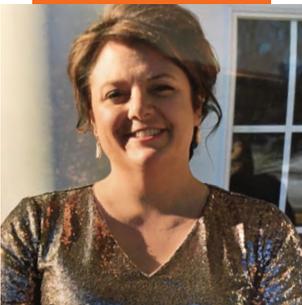
**BETH FURNARI** *Acting Principal, Information Technology and Software Engineering High School, Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet Campus*

Beth, a life-long educator and leader for Bridgeport Public Schools, has served the city in multiple capacities, eventually leading to her current position as the Principal of The Information Technology Magnet High School. There, Beth leads the shift in the Instructional Core from a “traditional” philosophy to a STEM-based, career-aligned ideology and continues to focus her attention on promoting STEM to better prepare her students for college and career.



**DIANE PINTAVALLE** *Science Teacher, Glastonbury High School*

Diane is a force in the development of our nation’s future scientists. Teaching AP Biology and Advanced Research Mentorship at Glastonbury High School, Diane developed an extensive network of mentors from universities and industries. Diane is a 2017 Presidential Awardee for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. She is a 2020 CT Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalist and has recently received CSTA’s Excellence in High School Science Teaching award.



**CATHERINE PISCITELLI** *Science Research Program Director, Amity Regional High School*

Catherine is in her 19th year of teaching at Amity High School where she is the Science Research Program Director. She majored in Biology at ECSU and continued on to earn her teaching certification, MS, and 6th year at SCSU so that she could spread her love and enthusiasm for STEM to students. She enjoys swimming, boating, reading, cooking, and vacationing with her husband and two sons.



**ROSEMARY RIBBER** *Transition Coordinator, Joel Barlow High School*

Rosemary works with secondary students to prepare them with skills they’ll need to succeed in the future. She feels strongly that outcomes are improved with support and collaboration. She strives to provide opportunities for students to explore innovative technologies, solve problems in creative ways and simply make this a better place. Rosemary is married and the proud mother of Amy, Paul and Emily. She believes that encouragement is magic.

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY: Postsecondary Academic Innovation & Leadership**



**REBECCA ANDREWS** *Associate Professor of Medicine, UConn Health Center*

Rebecca studied biology at Boston College and medicine at the University of CT where she also completed her residency. She is currently an Associate Professor, primary care physician, and the Internal Medicine Residency Associate Program Director/Director of Ambulatory Education at UConn Health. Dr. Andrews also serves as UConn Health's clinical lead for the CT Comprehensive Pain Center and Patient-Centered Medical Home. Her research and pedagogy combine innovative curricula and clinical experiences focused on pain management and primary care. Her two sons, an unabashed love of coffee and trivia, and half marathon training rule her world.



**MARIA CHRYSOCHOOU** *Department Head, Civil and Environmental Engineering, UConn School of Engineering*

Maria is the Department Head of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Connecticut. Her passion for environmental sustainability and real-world education led her to form the Connecticut Brownfields Initiative, an interdisciplinary training program that trains the next generation of environmental practitioners and leaders, while directly supporting Connecticut communities to clean up and revitalize their urban cores.



**FAYE ROGERS** *Associate Professor of Therapeutic Radiology; Associate Director, MD-PhD Program; Director, Yale BioMed Amgen Scholars Program, Yale School of Medicine*

Faye, PhD, is an Associate Professor and Associate Director of the MD-PhD Program at Yale School of Medicine. Additionally, she is the director of Yale BioMed SURF, an undergraduate summer research program. Dr. Rogers is passionate about cancer research and dedicated to inspiring the next-generation of scientists, particularly women and under-represented minorities. Dr. Rogers received her PhD from the University of Maryland Baltimore and postdoctoral training at Yale University.

# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Community & Innovation Leadership



**AUNDRYA MONTGOMERY** *Research Assistant, University of Connecticut*

Aundrya earned her Master of Science degree in Biomedical Science from the University of Connecticut where she worked to develop engineering strategies applicable to fingertip injuries. Her current research includes evaluating pediatric esophageal tissue engineering techniques and identifying the prevalence of obesity and its comorbidities among transgender youth. Aundrya also maintains an active role in outreach initiatives as a member of the Urban League of Greater Hartford Young Professionals.



**RACHEL PETRO** *Mechanical Design Engineer, Pratt & Whitney*

Rachel has a passion for engineering and a love of helping others to grow. She works at Pratt & Whitney, where she is currently a design engineer supporting suppliers and operations. She is an active member in the P&W Hispanic Leadership Forum and serves as community relations chair. Rachel has been able to engage with the community developing and leading programs to introduce and nurture an appreciation for STEM.



**MARANDA WONG** *Commercial Engines Deputy CIPT, MPE, Pratt & Whitney*

Maranda is the Commercial and Advanced Military Engines CIPT Deputy and ACE (Quality) Deputy Manager in the Materials & Processes Engineering department for Pratt & Whitney. She plays a key role in integrating MPE technology with the different modules for the GTF and Advanced Military Engines. She mentors and coaches project management skills and reinforces use of ACE tools to aid in everyday problem solving to help drive the business.

Learn more about the finalists at [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)

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# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Entrepreneurial Innovation & Leadership



**JESSICA BAILEY** CEO, *Greenworks Lending*

Jessica led the design, management, and implementation of the nation's first successful C-PACE program prior to co-founding Greenworks Lending. From 2004-2012, Jessica worked at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as the program officer for sustainable development. She focused on mitigating climate change and promoting clean energy. Jessica has received numerous awards and positive recognition for her work including Ernst & Young's Entrepreneurial Winning Women of 2019 program, "Champion of Change" by the White House, dubbed a "Green Warrior" by Hartford Business Journal, and named to Connecticut Magazine's 2018 "40 under 40."



**VIRGINIA JULIANO** Founder and CEO, *CobbleCord*

Prior to starting CobbleCord, Virginia worked at Showtime Networks leading award-winning marketing campaigns and trailblazing projects. While launching their streaming service, she recognized that the rapidly changing space would cause tremendous confusion for average people and built a user-friendly solution in CobbleCord to help. Her hobbies include painting, yoga, salsa dancing, reading and documentaries. She also enjoys cooking and wine tasting with her husband. She holds an MBA from NYU Stern.



**DONNA LECKY** Co-Founder and CFO, *HealthVenture & HealthHavenHub*

Donna is Co-Founder of HealthVenture Corporation, HealthHavenHub and the Managing Director of HealthVenture Capital. Previously she was VP, Chief Tax Counsel and Treasurer at Omnicare, a CVS Company, and held similar roles at HealthSouth. She operated in management roles at KPMG, Ernest & Young and Deloitte. She holds a Yale MBA, completed University of Oxford's Private Equity and Emory's LLM Taxation programs, and holds a JD from Howard and a Bachelor's from Temple.



**COLLEEN MCGUIRE** Founder and CEO, *Silver Fern Healthcare*

Colleen has 35 years of business experience, a passion for healthcare reform, and a commitment to addressing the unmet needs of people with chronic diseases. Colleen co-founded Silver Fern and is responsible for leading the company through its current phase of fast-paced growth. Over her career, Colleen has held senior P&L leadership positions in large public financial service companies and has worked as a consultant to executive leadership teams in large and small companies.

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY: Entrepreneurial Innovation & Leadership** *(continued)*



### **SHANA SCHLOSSBERG** *Founder and CEO, Upward*

Shana is a serial entrepreneur with a vision to reinvigorate second-tier American cities through strategic public-private collaborations. A lifelong technologist and social entrepreneur, Shana's will to build a tech-enabled, talent-driven, and equitable nation drove her to found Upward, a Hartford-based real estate and community advancement venture that promotes entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and talent retention. Shana's latest venture, Upward Labs, is a venture fund and pilot program for global startups in AgeTech and PropTech.



### **ERIKA SMITH** *CEO, ReNetX Bio*

Erika is the CEO of ReNetX Bio, a clinical stage company committed to reversing neurological damage and disease. Over the last 25 years, she has driven the advancement of innovative life-science technologies as an executive, investor and entrepreneur. She is an invited TedX presenter, was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year (BioCT), and co-authored "Empowering Women Entrepreneurs" sponsored by JPMorgan Chase. She serves as a board member for BIO and holds a bachelor's in Biomedical & Electrical Engineering and MBA from Vanderbilt University.

Learn more about the finalists at [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY:** Research Innovation & Leadership



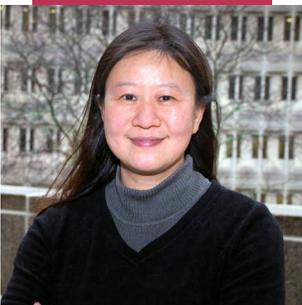
**ELIZABETH CONTINI** *Principal Biomedical Engineer, Medtronic*

Beth studied biomedical engineering at the University of Rochester and joined Medtronic in 2007. As a principal engineer, she leads a team that improves surgical stapling devices and her innovation has resulted in several patents. She has helped shape local culture to be more inclusive and challenged conventional approaches by co-founding a novel development program and by holding a leadership position in Medtronic Women's Network for over a decade.



**DARCY RONAN** *Assistant Professor, Sacred Heart University*

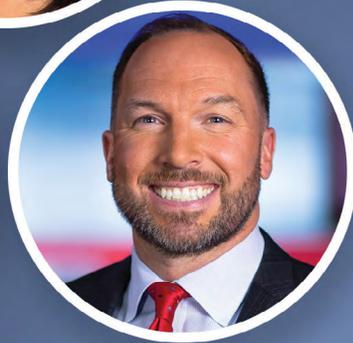
Darcy is a STEM educator and researcher in Sacred Heart University's College of Education. A science teacher by background, Darcy's courses, programs and partnerships build capacity and passion for excellence in science, technology and engineering education. She leads a \$5.1 million US DOE grant to integrate computer science into elementary curricula. Her research explores how experiences and contexts impact STEM identity and beliefs in career aspirants and educators.



**BEIYAN ZHOU** *Associate Professor of Immunology, UConn Health Center*

Beiyan leads a research group of young scientists dedicated to biomedical research. Her research group has discovered regulators of immune cell function and fine-maps of complex immune cell actions in humans that could be essential for cancer immunotherapy and treatment of cardiovascular and diabetic diseases. She has won the Junior Faculty Award from the American Diabetes Association, published many highly cited papers and has been awarded half a dozen inventions.

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LAURA HUTCHINSON, ALYSSA TAGLIA, KEITH KOUNTZ & GIL SIMMONS

# WOI? WOW!

Connecticut Magazine, produced by the Hearst Connecticut Media Group, is a proud sponsor of the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology/ Connecticut Technology Council's 16th Annual Women Of Innovation awards. Kudos to the 50 finalists making tomorrow's headlines.



ConnecticutMag.com

**Connecticut**  
magazine

# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Small/Medium Business Innovation & Leadership



**ANGELA CACACE** *Vice President, Neuroscience, Arvinas, Inc.*

Angela is driven by a passion for innovation and STEM. Responsible for building the neuroscience pipeline and leading the targeted-degradation platform biology team at Arvinas, Angela also devotes her time to mentorship, volunteering in support of patient advocacy groups, and initiating biotechnology student training programs. She is frequently asked to present at conferences internationally. Notably, Angela has co-invented novel molecules and contributed to the discovery of approved therapies.



**ANTONIA CIAVERELLA** *Architectural Designer, Tecton Architects*

Antonia is a designer, mentor, and continuous learner. Inspired by years on stage crew creating and changing environments behind the scenes, she now explores our spatial experience through the lens of architecture, wellness, and evidence-based practice. A graduate of Virginia Tech, she embraces their motto of service through mentorship and teaching. Antonia's focus on sustainability and health sets the stage for occupants to play leading roles in a building's performance.



**ANN FLYNN** *Founder and CEO, IQ Telecom (IQT)*

Ann has been a leader and entrepreneur in the telecommunications industry for more than 40 years. She developed a customized, innovative inventory and expense management software platform, IQ 360, and founded IQ Telecom (IQT), which will celebrate 20 years in business next year. IQT manages an annual revenue in excess of \$100 million at more than 5,000 locations. Ann holds a bachelor's degree in Information Management and an Executive Certificate from Dartmouth College.



**MICHELLE JOHNSON** *Chief Operating Officer, Metrum Research Group*

Michelle brings over 15 years of business management experience from a variety of industries including media and athletics to her current role as Chief Operating Officer at MetrumRG. With an MBA from Babson College, she has extensive training and practical experience in entrepreneurial business strategy, market positioning, and management of diverse teams. A marketer by training, Michelle is driven by a creative and consistent approach to communication across various key stakeholders.

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY:** Small/Medium Business Innovation & Leadership



### **CARRIE MCCUSKER** *Technical Lead, Sonalysts*

Carrie has developed software solutions for Sonalysts, Incorporated for over 25 years, in areas spanning anti-submarine warfare, weather analysis, and satellite training systems for the Air Force. Currently the Technical Lead for development of a GPS satellite command and control trainer for U.S. Space Force satellite operators, she spearheaded the creation of Sonalysts' Innovation Group (SIG) whose mission is to recognize and promote innovation and entrepreneurship within the company.



### **MELISSA PETRUSKA** *Senior Research Scientist, Sonata Scientific, LLC*

Throughout her career, Melissa has delivered innovative materials solutions to technical and environmental challenges. In her current role as senior researcher and principal investigator at Sonata Scientific, Melissa develops novel catalysts for air purification and self-disinfecting surfaces. These materials can be used in diverse ways to improve air quality, increase the shelf life of fresh produce, and provide protection against surface-borne bacteria and viruses.

Learn more about the finalists at [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)

# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Large Business Innovation & Leadership



**JENNIFER GAFFNEY** *Senior Project Manager, Walt Disney Company*

Jenny is a Senior Project Manager for Disney's Direct-to-Consumer & International segment currently supporting ESPN's Fantasy App and Web portfolio. Jenny is on Disney's Women + Tech leadership team and previously served on the ESPN+ launch team. She has an MBA and Advanced Business Certificates in both Human Resource Management and Project Management from the University of Connecticut. She has a Bachelor of Business Administration from Cumberland University.



**JACQUELYNN GAROFANO** *Margaret Ingels Engineering Development Program Manager, Raytheon Technologies*

Jacquelynn is program manager of the Margaret Ingels Engineering Development Program at Raytheon Technologies, leading the next generation of engineers who will redefine aerospace and defense. She earned a doctorate from UCONN and was named a WOI in '11. She was named Forty under 40, twice, and was honored by CWEALF and the CT Science Center for advancing women and girls in STEM. She holds two U.S. patents and authored eleven publications.



**AMY GRACE** *Director, Advanced Sustainment, Pratt & Whitney*

Over her 30-year career with Raytheon Technologies, Amy's passion has been applying advanced analysis techniques to enhance customer experience with P&W engine and Collins Aerospace systems. Amy was inducted into the Collins Aerospace Fellows Program in 2018. She recently returned to her P&W Military Engines roots as Director, Advanced Sustainment, to develop cutting-edge tools to enable future support of 6000+ engines. Amy received her BS in Aerospace Engineering from Syracuse University.



**LESLIE HAWLEY** *Executive Director, Pfizer Inc.*

Leslie is an Executive Director in the Pharmaceutical Sciences division of Pfizer R&D. She applied her expertise in analytical, regulatory, and drug formulation sciences to bring important new medicines including Xeljanz and Crisaborole to patients who suffer from debilitating inflammatory and immunological diseases. Leslie is a member of the Board of Directors of S.T.E.P.S., Inc., holds a BS in Chemistry from U.C. Berkeley, a Ph.D. from UCLA and an MBA from URI.



*Congratulations*

to all Women of Innovation honorees and Large  
Business Innovation and Leadership finalist,

*Sarah Wojiski, Ph.D.*

JAX Director of Education



**The Jackson  
Laboratory**

# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Large Business Innovation & Leadership *(continued)*



**CHRISTINE SEYMOUR** *Director, Global CMC, Pfizer*

Christine is a R&D Leader with 25 years of experience in chemical process development and regulatory sciences where she has led development/commercialization of many pharmaceutical products. She is a globally recognized technical expert, extensively presents/publishes including several books, serves on several University Advisory Boards, and was the 2018 American Institute of Chemical Engineers President. Chris is passionate about mentoring the next generation. She is a yogini and a yoga teacher.



**SHERI SHAMBLIN** *Director, Pfizer Inc.*

Sheri is a Director at Pfizer Global Research & Development, where she leads a team of scientists who design and develop new drug delivery platforms intended to address the needs of specific patient populations. Recognized for her expertise in oral controlled drug delivery, she has a successful track record progressing novel drugs to commercial medicines. She is driven by her passion for science and desire to promote health and wellness.



**SARAH WOJISKI** *Director of Education and External Programs, The Jackson Laboratory*

As Director of Education at The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine, Sarah oversees educational programs and provides mentorship for student and trainee populations ranging from high schoolers through postdoctoral fellows. With over 11 years of experience in teaching, curriculum development and program administration in the sciences, her work emphasizes experiential learning opportunities, promoting effective and innovative teaching practices, and fostering diversity and inclusion in the biomedical workforce.

Learn more about the finalists at [ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation](https://ctcreates.org/women-of-innovation)

# THE FINALISTS

## CATEGORY: Inspiring STEM Equitability Award



**KAYLA CLOUTIER** *Principal R&D Engineer, Medtronic*

Kayla has worked for Medtronic for almost 9 years in various product development engineering roles designing and testing instruments that are used in laparoscopic surgery. In her current role as Principal R&D Engineer, Kayla leads pre-clinical studies evaluating the efficacy of a hernia fixation implant while managing testing for an electro-mechanical delivery system. She is passionate about sharing her STEM experience to inspire future generations of engineers and scientists.



**KATHERINE COYNER** *Associate Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, UConn Health*

Katherine is a Associate Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at UConn Health and specializes in sports medicine. She serves as a team physician for the UConn Huskies and previously served as the head team doctor for the WNBA Connecticut Sun. In the United States, fewer than 7% of orthopedic surgeons are women; because of this, Katherine is passionate about paving the way for women in the world of medicine. In Connecticut, she has educated 573 high school women through her unique educational programs.



**ELLEN LAST** *Experience Design Consultant, Slalom Consulting*

Ellen is a customer experience and digital product leader with over 12 years of experience in Product Management, Design Thinking and Innovation. Ellen has extensive experience designing and delivering full user experiences and applications at small startups to global corporations. With a passion for human-centric solutions, Ellen delights in the opportunity to help teams collaborate and incorporate Design Thinking practices in order to break new ground in their respective areas.



**CARLA LOPEZ** *Global Supply Chain COE Specialist, Pratt & Whitney*

Carla is a Project Manager in the Pratt & Whitney Global Supply Chain Center of Excellence. She has been the President of the Pratt & Whitney Hispanic Leadership Forum since 2019. As President, Carla has been able to carry out her passions for diversity, education and community involvement. She holds a BA in Supply Chain Management from Eastern Michigan University and an MBA from Indiana University, Kelly School of Business.

# THE FINALISTS

## **CATEGORY: Inspiring STEM Equitability Award** *(continued)*



### **SONYA RICHMOND** *Board Member, Connecticut Invention Convention*

Sonya is a 26-year Connecticut Invention Convention volunteer board member. She is proud to work with dedicated colleagues and teachers who share the belief that all students are enriched through invention and deserve a forum to display their original thoughts and problem-solving skills. Sonya was one of the founders of The STEMIE Coalition, which ran the first K-12 National Invention Convention to further share and elevate students' inventions of promise with peers and professionals.



### **NIASIA WILLIAMS** *Mechanical Systems Engineer, Pratt & Whitney*

Niasia graduated with honors from Rutgers University receiving her bachelor's and master's degree in Mechanical Engineering. While thriving in the aerospace industry where she validates cutting edge technologies, Williams completed a master's in STEM Education. After 9 years of working in schools, leading international non-profits such as NSBE, and mentoring youth and young adults, Williams founded Legacy Development Services, an organization helping impoverished youth and young adults realize their potential.



16th Annual  
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