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Contact Information:

Shelli Lissick
Bellmont Partners
651-276-6922
shelli@bellmontpartners.com

Advance IT Minnesota Announces Second Annual “Minnesota Aspirations for Women in Computing” Awards for High School Students

Applications accepted online through Oct. 31, 2013

MINNEAPOLIS (Sept. 18, 2013) - Despite holding six in 10 American jobs, women held just 25 percent of computing occupations in 2011. And of the 1.4 million expected openings for computer specialists in 2020, the current number of American graduates can fill only 30 percent.

To help bridge this gender and talent gap, and recognize young women in high school interested in technology, Advance IT Minnesota announces the second annual “Minnesota Aspirations for Women in Computing” awards. Advance IT Minnesota is seeking young women in high school across the state with outstanding achievements and aspirations in technology to apply for the awards program online at www.advanceitmn.org/aspirations-award from Sept. 18 through Oct. 31, 2013.

“Following last year’s successful debut, our goal with the awards program is to inspire significantly more young women to get involved in technology,” says Russell Fraenkel, director of Collaborative Programs and Outreach at Advance IT Minnesota. “Encouraging, recruiting and supporting young women as early as high school is critical. Our workforce needs their creativity and innovation, and these women have a phenomenal opportunity to be the next generation of leaders and innovators in a rapidly growing field.”

Last year, the Minnesota awards program, which had the highest participation rate in the country among single state first-year award programs, honored six winners and five runners-up across the state for their computing-related achievements and interests. Additionally, one Minnesota student from Brooklyn Park was named a winner of the national award, an honor given to only 35 students in the nation. Dorothy Berry, a student from St. Paul, was also selected as a runner-up for the national award.

“Winning this award showed me that programming is something I am good at. I’m very grateful, and I hope that more girls become aware of this award and apply for it,” says Sarah Aladetan, 2013 national and Minnesota award winner and Park Center Senior High School student.

The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) created the award in 2007 to encourage the computing aspirations of young women, introduce them to leadership opportunities in the field and generate visibility for women's participation in computing-related careers. Applicants in the Minnesota awards program will automatically be entered in the national level award.

Awards will be made based on the interests, accomplishments and community involvement of young women in computing and technology, as well as for their aspirations in computing and technology-related fields. Prizes for the award winners include scholarships, tech devices and software, cash rewards and mentorship/job shadowing opportunities at Minnesota technology firms. Students can submit applications for the award online at www.advanceitmn.org/aspirations-award from Sept. 18 to Oct. 31, 2013. Winners will be chosen in December and honored during events hosted by Minnesota technology firms in the spring of 2014.

All Minnesota applicants will automatically be entered into the national awards program. National winners will be honored at the 2013 Bank of America Technology Stars of the Future Showcase in Charlotte, N.C., and receive \$500 and a laptop computer.

Additional award program sponsors are being sought to support the collaborative efforts provided by the following inaugural partners: Thomson Reuters, Unisys Corporation, Twin Cities Chapter of the Association of Women in Computing, Maverick Software Consulting, Symantec, Black Data Processing Associates, Minnesota High Tech Association-Women Leading in Technology, Microsoft, Securian, Pearson Vue, Nerderly, ESP-IT, Nina Hale, Help/Systems, TECHdotMN, Girls in Tech Minneapolis Chapter and Advance IT Minnesota. For more information, contact Russell.Fraenkel@metrostate.edu.

About Advance IT Minnesota

Advance IT Minnesota engages employers, educators, technology professionals and learners to develop a more robust IT workforce in Minnesota. A Center of Excellence within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, it is housed at the Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis campus. For more information, visit www.advanceitmn.org.

About National Center for Women & Information Technology

The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) is a coalition of over 200 prominent corporations, academic institutions, government agencies, and non-profits working to increase women's participation in information technology (IT). To find out more, visit www.ncwit.org.