

# 45 Connecticut Inspiring STEM Leaders Selected as 2024 Women of Innovation® Finalists

*Recognizing Innovation and Leadership in Academia, Community, Corporate, Entrepreneurship, and Research; Youth Scholarships to be Awarded*

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT, UNITED STATES, July 17, 2024

[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- Forty-five accomplished Connecticut women will be honored for their achievements in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) at the 19th annual Women of Innovation® awards, hosted by the Connecticut Technology Council.



These inspiring leaders were selected from a field of nearly 100 nominations. Nominees included scientists, researchers, academics, manufacturers, student leaders, entrepreneurs, and technicians who are driving scientific advancement and business growth throughout Connecticut.

The prestigious awards ceremony recognizing the outstanding group and announcing winners in eight categories will be held on Tuesday, October 22, from 4:30 PM to 7 PM at the Woodwinds in Branford. All finalists will be recognized at the ceremony. Youth finalists (high school juniors or seniors) will also receive scholarships to further their education.

“Since the first Women of Innovation event that I attended, I have been extremely impressed with the great contributions these outstanding women (including this 2024 WOI group) have had and continue to have on the technology ecosystem and our society. The Youth category finalists are especially astounding; they have accomplished more in 17 or 18 years than most people do in a lifetime,” said Giovanni Tomasi, President/Chief Technology Officer of RSL Fiber Systems and Board Chair of CTC.

“Congratulations to all these amazing women – our 2024 Women of Innovation! The Connecticut Technology Council is committed and proud to carry on the legacy of this impactful event with the support of our members, sponsors, and partners,” said Milena Stankova Erwin, CTC’s Executive Director. “We look forward to celebrating all the finalists in October”.

All nominees had to meet the following minimum requirements: currently working or studying in Connecticut, demonstrated strong leadership abilities, and having served as a mentor - either short or long-term, peer, career or life mentor. Nominees also met the specific requirements of the award category in which they were nominated.

Registration for the awards event opens this week. A link to register, sponsor, and additional details can be found at [www.ct.org/womenofinnovation](http://www.ct.org/womenofinnovation).

#### 2024 Women of Innovation®

##### Corporate Innovation and Leadership – Large Business

- Emily Davis - Engineering Director, Released Product Engineering, Medtronic
- Anna Mercaldi - Senior Engineering, Process Chemistry and Surface Engineering, Pratt & Whitney, An RTX Business
- Catherine Pratt - Program Manager, HyAxiom, Inc.
- Laura Rackley - Senior Manager, Electrical Engineering and Continuous Improvement, Fuel Cell Energy, Inc.
- Melissa Samuel - GTF-Advantage Deputy Validation Manager - Pratt & Whitney, An RTX Business
- Maria Smerekanicz – Program Manager, Advanced Programs, Sikorsky, A Lockheed Martin Company

##### Corporate Innovation and Leadership – Small/Medium Business

- Sheryl Gough - Associate Director, Oncology/Biology, Arvinas, Inc.
- Sara Harari - Associate Director of Innovation and Strategic Advisor to the President & CEO, Connecticut Green Bank
- Christine Kurtz - Senior Project Manager, Wright-Pierce
- Anna Mumford - Cybersecurity Consultant, CONNSTEP
- Vaishali Shah – CEO/Owner, theCoderSchool Connecticut
- Susan Winkler –Vice President and Executive Director, Connecticut Insurance and Financial Services

##### Entrepreneurial Innovation and Leadership

- Cherie Griffith-Dunn - Founder and CEO, Cyproteck, Inc.
- Rigu Gupta - CEO and President, PiroGon, Inc.
- Khamani Harrison – Founder, The Key Bookstore
- Jacqueline Heard – CEO and Co-founder, Enko Chem, Inc.

### Research Innovation and Leadership

- Iuliana Cernatescu - Senior Technical Fellow, Materials Characterization and Applications, Pratt & Whitney, An RTX Business
- Liza Comita - Co-Director, Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture, Professor of Tropical Forest Ecology, Yale School of the Environment, Yale University
- Xiuling Lu - Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy
- Kimberly Saviers - Senior Manager & Team Lead, RTX Technology Research Center
- Tamilla Triantoro - Associate Professor of Business Analytics and Information Systems, Co-Director of the M&T Center for Women & Business, Quinnipiac University School of Business
- Zongjie Wang - Associate Director, Eversource Energy Center/Assistant Professor, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Connecticut
- Yanjiao Zhou - Associate Professor, Dept. of Medicine, UConn Health

### Community Innovation and Leadership

- Ellianna Boothe - R&D Engineer II, Medtronic
- Marcia LaFemina - President, Penn Globe
- Maralis Martinez - Data Analytics and Quality Assurance Manager, The CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence
- Jennifer Pascal - Assoc. President in Residence and Assoc. Department Head, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, University of Connecticut
- Beth Weller - Director of Operations, The Children's Museum & Preschool and Roaring Brook Nature Center

### Academic Innovation and Leadership

- Sama Abdulmalik - Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Orthopedic Surgery, UConn Health
- Lynn Byers - Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering Program Director, Quinnipiac University
- Caroline Dealy - Associate Professor, Depts. of Orthodontics and Biomedical Engineering, School of Dental Medicine; and Depts. of Orthopedic Surgery and Cell Biology, School of Medicine, University of Connecticut
- Fumiko Hoeft - Campus Dean and Chief Administrative Officer, University of Connecticut, Waterbury
- Jasna Jankovic - Associate Professor, Materials Science and Engineering Dept, College of Engineering, University of Connecticut
- Wendy Ku - Career & Technical Education Dept. Supervisor & Technology & Engineering Education Teacher, Simsbury Public Schools
- Jordan Wissinger - Instructional Coach - Technology, Hartford Public Schools

### Collegian Innovation and Leadership

- Emily Balboni - Recent Graduate, Quinnipiac University
- Patricia Hare - DMD-PhD Candidate, School of Dental Medicine, UConn Health

- Tvesha Parikh – PhD Graduate Student, Biomedical Sciences, UConn Health
- Lilly Pubillones – Undergraduate Student, Trinity College
- Paula-Marie Simpson – Undergraduate Research Student, Southern Connecticut State University
- Laxmi Vobbineni – Undergraduate Student, UConn Health

#### Youth Innovation and Leadership

- Grace Guglielmo - Student, Wilton High School
- Angela Humphrey - Student, Joel Barlow High School
- Snigtha Mohanraj - Student, Engineering and Science University Magnet School
- Presthika Vijaykumar - Student, Glastonbury High School

The 19th annual Women of Innovation® awards event is sponsored by Medtronic (Platinum); Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP (Silver); Carillon Technologies (Bronze and Scholarship); Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development, Day Pitney LLP and McCarter & English, LLP (Bronze). Supporting level sponsorships and scholarship funding is provided by Arvinas, Bento Engine, Connecticut Green Bank, Fuel Cell Energy, HyAxiom, IncomeConductor, Nel Hydrogen, The Jackson Laboratory and Visual Technologies, Inc. Media Sponsor is WTNH News 8.

Sponsorships and scholarship donations are still accepted. For more information on how to support WOI and women leaders in STEM, contact Milena Erwin at [executive.director@ct.org](mailto:executive.director@ct.org) or Sheryl O'Connor at [soconnor@wealthconductor.com](mailto:soconnor@wealthconductor.com).

#### About the Connecticut Technology Council

Formed in 1994, the Connecticut Technology Council (CTC) is the voice of all technology companies in the state. It serves as a vital platform for sharing ideas and resources for its members, uniting Connecticut's technology ecosystem across sectors. The CTC is dedicated to fostering a collaborative ecosystem that drives growth and innovation for Connecticut's tech sector.

The CTC offers exceptional networking, learning, and promotional opportunities, connecting a diverse network of technology leaders, educational institutions, government agencies, non-profits, and service providers. Members gain access to a dynamic community of influential tech leaders, founders, business owners, and partners. Through exclusive, invitation-only forums and signature events like the annual Women of Innovation awards, the CTC addresses key technology issues and trends, providing valuable insights and opportunities for knowledge sharing among industry experts and peers, both in Connecticut and globally.

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