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## AAUW Awards Scholarships to 10 Outstanding Local Young Women

Submitted by Sandy Fox-Sohner



Top row, scholarship winners and keynote speaker, from left: Carlyn Wright, Annie Ye, Dr. Margaret Race, Samya Faiq, Elizabeth Sandoval-Torres; front row, Tech Trek winners: Anna Fields, Caroline Sernett, Audrey Concepcion, Maya Ramesh, Morgan Rogers, Cara Wolfe Photo provided

It is the mission of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to break down barriers for women and girls by promoting education and supporting their personal and professional growth. On April 22, the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette (OML) branch of AAUW gathered with members, parents, and friends to award 10 remarkable young women from Lamorinda schools with Tech Trek camp scholarships or college scholarships.

Tech Trek is a week-long summer camp where girls are inspired to consider careers in science, technology, engineering, or math: the STEM fields. Tech Trek's specific mission is to break down the barriers that prevent women from entering STEM professions. A recent study conducted by AAUW, "Why So Few," documents the much smaller percentage of women in science and math careers as compared to men.

The OML AAUW branch has provided a total of 47 scholarships to Tech Trek camp for local seventh-grade girls in the past 15 years. This year, six Lamorinda girls will be attending the Grace Hopper Tech Trek camp at Stanford University. Each Tech Trek scholarship winner was presented with a certificate, a book highlighting ingenious inventions by women, and an AAUW journal to take to camp to record their experience.

The Tech Trek scholarship winners for 2012 are Anna Fields and Caroline Sernett (Orinda Intermediate School), Audrey Concepcion and Maya Ramesh (Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School), and Morgan Rogers and Cara Wolfe (Stanley Intermediate School). These girls are outstanding students with a passion for science and math. Each girl read their application essay at the ceremony, indicating their wide range of career goals, including neurology, medicine, marine biology, rain forest protection, coral reef research and protection, astronomy, math, architecture, computer animation, and engineering design.

The four college scholarship winners for 2012 are Carlyn Wright (Miramonte High School), Annie Ye (Campolindo High School), Samya Faiq (Acalanes High School), and Elizabeth Sandoval-Torres from Saint Mary's College. All of the scholarship winners were awarded with certificates and flowers, and each gave a presentation regarding their incredible community service and career goals.

Margaret Race, Ph.D., gave the keynote presentation for the awards ceremony, entitled "From Mudflats to Mars:

A Personal Odyssey." Race is an ecologist who works with NASA and the SETI institute, where she focuses on astrobiology, searches for extraterrestrial life, and science policy issues. She chose this presentation topic, she says, "Because my career path has taken many turns. The career I am in now did not exist when I finished my degree. It has been a true odyssey, from marine biology to the solar system."

Race specializes in planetary protection-how to plan robotic and human missions in ways that ensure environmental protection of both the Earth and locations in outer space.

Knowing that microbes can survive the harsh environment of space, the ecologist stresses the importance of planetary protection, asking what precautions we need to take for future missions to other planets-and how to prepare for missions that will return to Earth with samples from other worlds. Race has offered to work with the OML AAUW Tech Trek committee in the coming year.

Anyone interested in supporting the AAUW-OML Tech Trek and Scholarship programs, or joining AAUW, may obtain more information by visiting [www.aauwoml.org](http://www.aauwoml.org).

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