

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 10-18-23

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### STEM Forward Announces Excellence in STEM Awards Winners to be recognized at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual sySTEMnow Conference, Focusing on Breaking STEM Barriers and Inspiring Talent Together

Milwaukee, Wisconsin – October 18, 2023. STEM Forward is thrilled to announce the 2023 Excellence in STEM Award winners, more commonly known as the Stemmy Awards. Help us congratulate the following:

- **Education Category:** [Catholic Memorial High School](#)

Catholic Memorial High School (CMH) provides its students the unique opportunity to combine academics with experiential learning and project-based education in the STEM fields. CMH is a fully certified Project Lead the Way (PLTW) school and is one of just three schools in Wisconsin to earn national recognition as a PLTW Distinguished School for six consecutive years for STEM curriculum and career readiness. CMH's STEM curriculum elevates the student experience beyond the classroom and into the real world – providing a STEM curriculum that heightens critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills in hands-on project-based classes and by participating in internships at local companies and organizations focused on various STEM fields. As former student, Alex Nines stated, *"I owe much of my success in engineering to the STEM program at CMH. I learned countless skills and lessons at such a young age that have directly impacted my college experience. Within my graduating class in the STEM program, I cannot think of a single student who is not pursuing a degree in STEM. This program demands excellence and allows its students to soar above expectations."*

- **Individual Category:** [Lalitha Murali](#)

Lalitha Murali is a gifted and talented coordinator for the [Glendale River-Hills School District](#). She serves as a board member for the Wisconsin Association of Talented and Gifted and the Wisconsin Science Education Foundation. She is a fair director for the Badger State Science and Engineering Junior High Fair. She organizes and conducts the Badger State Science and Engineering Fair every year for WI students and conducts various STEM workshops in her community to motivate underrepresented students in STEM education. As a STEM advocate, she believes that given the right resources and experiences, every child can reach his or her true potential and has mentored over 5,000 students over the past 15 years. Her students participate in regional, state, and international science competitions every year including the [Future City Competition](#), where they have won first place the last four years, advancing to the worldwide competition in Washington DC. Her school district is one of the diverse districts in Wisconsin State where 66% of their student population are minorities and more than 35% of them are eligible for free and reduced lunch. She teaches over 100 students in grades 4-8 and pushes the boundaries of what it means to be a learner and what it means to be a teacher regularly. In addition to fostering love in the humanities and developing creative thinking skills, Lalitha models her curriculum based on innovation and STEM.

- **Employer Category:** [Milwaukee Robotics Academy](#)

Milwaukee Robotics Academy's mission is to inspire and educate the next generation of Milwaukee's STEM professionals and entrepreneurs by providing applied training, skills-based programs, and

technical facilities for students in Milwaukee. It is committed to supporting high-tech STEM education in underserved populations in the City of Milwaukee. Their unique focus combines the thrill of competition with high-level skills training to engage youth in programming, engineering, design, and fabrication. From youth football to elite basketball, young people in Milwaukee are gaining skills through enjoyment, competition, and hard work. For over a decade in the basement of a Milwaukee high school, a successful robotics team has been developing a STEM workforce for the greater Milwaukee area.

- **Partnership Category:** [PUMP-CS](#)

PUMP-CS is located at Marquette University, created and led by Dr Dennis Brylow, Professor and Chair of the Computer Science Department. PUMP-CS was created in 2014 because of grants from the National Science Foundation as part of their Broadening Participation in Computing (BPC) initiative for diversity, equity, and inclusion in computing. The mission of PUMP-CS is to create equitable access to computer science curricula and experiences for all Wisconsin K-12 students. The strategies to accomplish this capacity include building curriculum and professional development in computer science for educators in Wisconsin and beyond. There has been a particular focus on creating opportunities for students of color and other marginalized groups of students through its nearly decade-long work with Milwaukee Public Schools and other urban centers throughout WI and its work reaching out to rural communities. PUMP-CS collaborates with many entities including universities, tech organizations, and community partners.

We will showcase the 2023 Stemmy Award Winners during our 20<sup>th</sup> annual [sySTEMnow Conference](#), held on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at The Italian Community Center. Metro Milwaukee's premier STEM conference brings together business leaders, community members, and government officials to share best practices and lessons learned. This year's theme is ***Breaking STEM Barriers and Inspiring Talent Together***, so join in the discussion as we exchange best practices from existing STEM programs and discuss the next steps to break down barriers to STEM for all students.

We are pleased to announce our two keynote speakers are **Maynard Okereke**, better known as the **Hip Hop MD** and founder of [Hip Hop Science](#), an organization Maynard created to encourage minorities and youth to pursue more advanced career paths, and **Thea Sahr**, Deputy Executive Director of [DiscoverE](#), a coalition dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of engineers, technicians, and technologists and engaging K-12 students in engineering and tech. Both speakers will discuss key local STEM priorities from a national perspective. Along with the keynote speakers, we have 12 breakout sessions with a variety of representations from greater Milwaukee.

To view a detailed agenda and learn more about sySTEMnow Conference, visit <https://www.stemforward.org/systemnow-conference>. Don't miss out; [register](#) for the sySTEMnow Conference today. We also encourage you to connect with STEM Forward on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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### **About STEM Forward**

STEM Forward is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and metro Milwaukee's leading STEM education and outreach provider. STEM Forward's programs, events, and activities inspire local youth to pursue STEM careers and provide a talent pipeline to businesses in southeastern Wisconsin.