

About the NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing—Oregon & SW Washington Region

“Encouraging young women’s interest in technology careers is critical: our workforce needs their creativity and their innovation,” - Lucy Sanders, CEO and Co-founder of NCWIT.

What is NCWIT?

NCWIT is the National Center for Women & Information Technology, a 501(c)(3)* coalition that works to increase diversity in computing and IT. NCWIT believes that greater diversity will create a larger and more competitive workforce, and promote the design of technology that is as broad and innovative as the population it serves. NCWIT focuses on improving diversity across the entire spectrum: K-12 through college education, and on to academic, corporate and entrepreneurial careers.

What is the Oregon and SW Washington Regional Affiliate?

NCWIT has divided the nation into 75 different regions. Our region is one of the largest covering all of Oregon and the portions of Washington along the river near Portland – over 350 high schools. We partner with the Oregon Computer Science Teachers Association (OCSTA), the Oregon Colleges and Universities, regional high tech companies, Business Education Compact, Saturday Academy, and ChickTech, to name a few. Our mission is to implement and support the NCWIT programs in our region. Some NCWIT regions do awards only. We cover all levels including middle school, high school, college, and professionals, as well as C4C counselors, educator recognition and with OCSTA training, and advocating for computing in schools.

What is the award and why is it important?

The Aspirations Award is the cornerstone to the rest of the program. The NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing recognizes young women at the high-school level for their computing-related talents, achievements, and interests. The goal is, quite simply, to find the top young tech-oriented high school aged women in our region and by recognizing them and offering them opportunities, to encourage them to continue in technical fields through college and into technical careers. There are awards at both the national and regional levels and a new program at the college level. The awards also recognize the high schools offering computing programs along with their CS teachers, and winning girls. NCWIT recognizes 35 outstanding computing teachers, nationally each year.

Besides the Award what are other elements of the program?

Part is to advocate for computing curricula in schools, including CS teacher & program recognition and training programs for teachers, counselors, and administrators. Part is retention in colleges. This includes awards, grants, student chapters and a regional conference. Part is to build bridges from high schools to middle schools, and from high schools to college computing and engineering programs. Winning girls are offered Aspire IT grants to run middle school summer outreach programs. Working with partners, we offer girls opportunities to learn and work in computing, including mentoring, internships, tours and job shadowing, access to professional conferences and special programs in industry and on college campuses. NCWIT research shows over 80% of the girls selected enter a computing related field or pair computing with other fields. It works!

How are award-winners selected?

Applicants are encouraged to apply and endorsed by their schools. Award-winners are selected for their demonstrated, outstanding aptitude and interest in information technology/computing; solid leadership ability; good academic history; community outreach, and plans for post-secondary education. The judging process is blind (no names or personal information) and conducted at the national level. All applicants are judged independently by panels of tech professionals from industry, colleges, and Universities.

When are award-winners selected?

- Applications are open from mid-September to the end of October.
- More than one girl can apply from a school, and girls can apply every year they are in high school.
- Judging occurs in November and December
- National Awards are announced during CS Education Week in mid-December
- Regional Awards are announced in late December and early January
- Awards are presented at a special Awards Ceremony in mid-April at Lewis & Clark College
- The girls have access to professional conferences, mentoring, scholarships, and summer internships,

Why should my company or school get involved?

The girls we select will be part of your college applicant pool in a few short years and in your company employment application pool after that. It is in the best interests of the community to have this supply of top technical talent but it takes the full tech community to make this happen .

Questions and Contact information: Ron Tenison, regional committee co-chair, tenison@frontier.com
NCWIT Websites: www.ncwit.org (general information), www.aspirations.org (applications and award info)