Five outstanding young researchers win AOAC Analytical Science Student Award

AOAC INTERNATIONAL, Eurofins Foundation award recognizes up and coming scientists for their innovative work in life science testing

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND, US, August 5, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- AOAC INTERNATIONAL today announced the winners of the 2020 AOAC INTERNATIONAL/Eurofins Foundation "Testing for Life" Student Award.

The Award, supported by the Eurofins Foundation, is designed to encourage student researchers who are advancing basic or applied science in analytical or molecular testing for food safety, food security, food defense, food authenticity, or health and environmental protection.

The students submitted abstracts and supporting material to be judged by an international panel of five analytical science experts from industry, government, academia, and nonprofit sectors.

"In its first year, the Testing for Life Student Award is already showcasing student work that is remarkable in its high level of scholarship and scientific rigor," said Gilles Martin, CEO of Eurofins Scientific.

Stephanie Bishop, of the University of British Columbia Okanagan, Canada, is a recent Ph.D. graduate majoring in Analytical Chemistry. Stephanie's research explores the effects of different environments and ecosystems on cyanobacteria growth and metabolism. Her analysis of traditional foods in ecosystems containing cyanobacteria in southern Peru and northern Chile revealed toxins suggesting that the Andean highlands may be undergoing environmental contamination from anthropogenic activities and climate change. Her findings generated national media interest, and her research was featured in more than a dozen news articles and video clips from news sources such as CBC and Global News.

Shimin Chen, a native of China, is a Graduate Research Assistant (Ph.D.) majoring in Food Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska. Shimin's research brings together advanced techniques including genomics and proteomics to solve critical food safety questions related to the management of food allergens. Her work on determining cashew protein in oil matrices,

called “pioneering” by one Testing for Life Award judge, is particularly significant because cashew allergy is one of the most prevalent and potent tree nut allergies. Oil roasting is commonly used in tree nut processing, raising the potential risk of allergen cross-contact associated if the oil is reused for different products.

Xingyi Jiang of Florida State University, is a Ph.D. student majoring in Nutrition and Food Science. Her research is focused on using food immunochemistry as a tool to improve food safety. Xingyi’s projects are focused on standardizing highly sensitive enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA) for the detection of food adulterants and food allergens and to authenticate meat species. These immunoassays have the potential to fight food fraud, support compliance with food regulations, and decrease food recalls.

Isaac Rukundo, of the University of Nebraska, is a Ph.D. candidate majoring in Food Science and Technology. A native of Uganda, Isaac recognized that new small and portable near infrared (NIR) spectrometers could have an application in developing countries that have been slow to adopt this technology due to cost, lack of awareness, and lack of training. His research provides a framework for assessing the performance of these handheld NIR devices for in situ monitoring of food authenticity throughout the supply chain and to facilitate tracing the source of contaminated foodstuffs. Isaac plans to work as a science educator at a university or an international agency focused on food and agriculture.

Aristeidis Tsagkaris of UCT Prague in the Czech Republic, is a Ph.D. candidate majoring in Food Analysis and Nutrition. A native of Greece, Aristeidis has developed a smartphone-based assay for the screening of neurotoxic organophosphate and carbamate pesticides in fruits and vegetables. This screening method can be performed on-site since the paper assay is embedded into a lab-on-a-chip prototype device able to inject samples and necessary reagents on-demand. This cost efficient (0.30 euro/per device) and rapid (results within 10 min) method can be used as a complementary screening tool to assist instrumental analysis by reducing the samples arriving in the lab.

Each winner receives a cash prize of US $3,000 and funding to attend the 2020 AOAC INTERNATIONAL Virtual Annual Meeting, where they will present their work to hundreds of leading analytical scientists from around the world. In addition, awardees receive a mentorship experience tailored to their area of research and a 1-year membership in AOAC. They will also be featured in AOAC’s highly respected Inside Laboratory Management magazine.

“We are proud to offer these students the opportunity to showcase their work, especially at this time when it is uniquely difficult for talented young people to establish these critical connections with leading scientists in their field,” said AOAC INTERNATIONAL Executive Director David Schmidt. “With this award, AOAC and Eurofins Foundation are not only helping to launch the scientific journeys of these students, we are taking real steps to build the future of analytical science.”

For more information, please contact Marida Hines, AOAC INTERNATIONAL Communications Manager at mhines@aoac.org.

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About AOAC INTERNATIONAL

AOAC INTERNATIONAL is a globally recognized, 501(c)(3), independent, third party, not-for-profit association and voluntary consensus standards developing organization founded in 1884. When analytical needs arise within a community or industry, AOAC INTERNATIONAL is the forum for finding appropriate science-based solutions through the development of microbiological and chemical standards. The AOAC Official Methods of Analysis database is used by food scientists around the world to facilitate public health and safety and to promote trade. For more information, please visit www.aoac.org.

About the Eurofins Foundation

The Eurofins Foundation is a Public Interest Foundation, which was established in Belgium in September 2019 to support long-term philanthropy efforts contributing to global health and safety and the protection of the environment. Eurofins Scientific is an international life sciences group which provides a unique range of analytical testing services to clients across multiple industries and is the world leader in food, environment, pharmaceutical and cosmetic products testing and in agroscience CRO services. With more than 47,000 employees and 800 laboratories in 50 countries and performing over 400 million tests every year to evaluate the safety, identity, composition, authenticity, origin, traceability, and purity of a wide range of products, as well as providing innovative clinical diagnostic testing services, Eurofins is contributing to a safer and healthier world for all through “Testing for Life.”

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