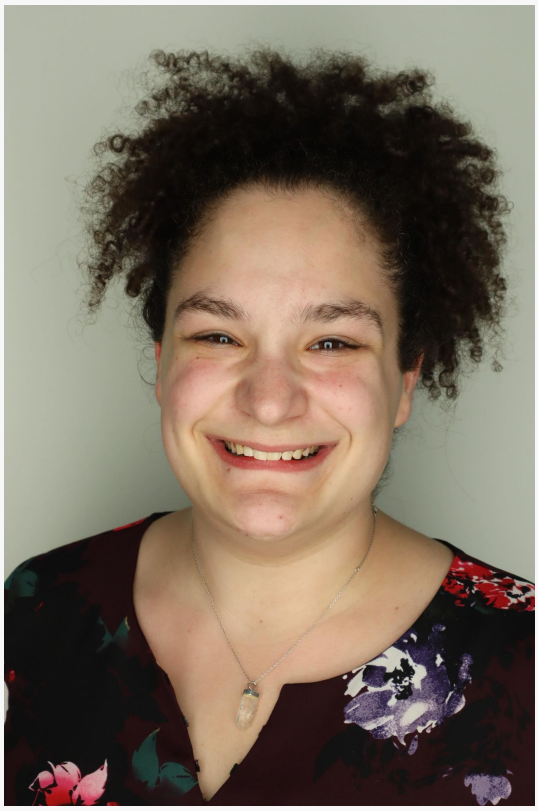
Claire Smith Awarded Aspire2STEAM Scholarship

Woman tech wiz wishes to help girls create the "Things of Tomorrow"



Claire Smith is working to level the playing field for girls in the technology industry.

DAVENPORT, IA, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Aspire2STEAM.org, which provides educational scholarships and mentoring to young women and girls who are working towards careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts, or math (STEAM), has awarded Claire Smith a LEGACY scholarship.

Claire Smith, a post-graduate student at the University of Maryland Global Campus, majoring in Learning Design and Technology, envisions a digital future that is more diversified, inclusive, and accessible. "Any job or field of study remotely related to computer science sees unprecedented underrepresentation among women," said the Master's Candidate. "Cybersecurity, network administration, game design, you name it — it's an echo chamber of male voices. That not only entails the usual hypermasculine environment, but also means that the education itself proves alienating."

A 2022 study conducted by the National Library of Medicine revealed that 84-90% of all computer science research is authored by men. "It's a field comprised of gatekeepers," asserted Claire. "Which is why I'm pursuing a Master's in Learning Design and Technology. Once we diversify educational technology, women will be able to jump over the many hurdles designed to reject and deject us, in and outside STEM."

The aspiring innovator was breaking boundaries as far back as 2015, when Claire participated in Girls Who Code DC. There, she learned six different programming languages: C++, CSS, HTML, Java, JavaScript, and Python. Her prowess awarded her recognition on that year's TenXList, which celebrates women commencing their technology careers. That same year, Claire joined Digital Harbor Foundation (DHF), an organization seeking to expand technological literacy. She

thereafter developed her first educational tool, “NatureCoders,” instructional insect toys made to teach children C++ through an interactive story that takes them beyond their desks and into nature. The project ended up winning the Baltimore Hackathon, but she could not have done it without help. Crucial to the project was her mentor, Jennifer Schachter, who taught her 3D printing and laser cutting. “I learned to blend art and technology because of her,” exclaimed Claire. “Technology shouldn’t be all ones and zeroes. It requires creativity, or else people won’t want to learn.”

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A huge problem plaguing STEM is a lack of mentorship. Claire’s contributions to STEM conferred her the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) award and several grants, which she used to mentor her own students. Via her own co-op, she taught coding to homeschoolers, a demographic disadvantaged in technological education. Additionally, via NCWIT’s AspireIT program, Claire led two classes for young girls: one for 3D printing and one for wearable electronics.

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>
> *Claire Smith*

Claire firmly believes that art precedes technology. “Fashion’s a huge passion of mine and people often forget that fashion is art. One of my proudest accomplishments is my ‘Lilypad-modified’ prom dress, an LED gown that actually got featured in TeenVogue and Mashable.” For Claire, merging fashion, something traditionally seen as feminine, with technology, something traditionally seen as masculine, was a necessary transgression. “Innovation necessitates challenging the status quo.”

Currently, Claire specializes in front-end development, digital fabrication, user experiences and interfaces, and web design. She holds a Bachelor’s in General Studies with a minor in Web and Digital Design, and has also been a John Hopkins Mellon Scholar and a Changemakers Fellowship award recipient. She also knows American Sign Language. “She’s done so many things, it’s astounding,” said Cheryl O’Donoghue, founder of Aspire2STEAM. “Claire has known what she’s

wanted to do for nine years, and her commitment to that dream remains steadfast. In fact, the goal's grown larger. That deserves recognition and celebration."

After graduating with her Master's, Claire plans to devote her wide skillset to that dream. "I want to break the stereotype that guys are the only ones who can code. To create an online space that allows women to learn STEM, so they can express themselves and create the things of tomorrow."

About Aspire2STEAM
Help us fund more scholarships for students just like Claire! Donate now.
Established in 2018, Aspire2STEAM.org is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which has earned Guidestar's Gold Seal for accountability, integrity, and transparency. Over the years it has become known for its scholarship and recognition program to support young women and girls who are working hard — aspiring — to achieve careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts, or math. Aspire2STEAM is committed to helping women and girls break the incredible barriers of scholarship award inequity, rising education costs and student debt, and the real, ever-present opportunity barriers that keep them out of most male-dominated industries.

Scholarship Applications Accepted Year-Round! Share this online application today.
Donate now. Your kindness is a catalyst for change and empowerment for the young women and girls we serve.

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