



Media Contact:
Tracy Shirer (tshirer@ctsciencecenter.org)
O: 860.520.2116, C: 860.817.1373
Connecticut Science Center | 250 Columbus Blvd | Hartford, CT 06103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center Announces New Award *Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Award Finalists Announced*

Hartford, CT- September 5, 2013 – The Connecticut Science Center, New England’s premier informal-science-learning institution, is pleased to announce a new award to be presented at The Green Gala on September 28: the **Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Award**. The award is part of the Science Center’s ***Celebrating Women in Science*** initiative, a two-year effort to raise the profile of women in the sciences and encourage girls and young women to pursue studies and careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The Finalists

Dr. Amy Howell is the Chemistry Department Head and Professor at the University of Connecticut, making her one of very few women in the country to lead a chemistry department. Dr. Howell also participates in efforts on campus to recruit and retain women and underrepresented minorities in the STEM fields.

Dr. Elif Kongar is a Professor in the University of Bridgeport’s Departments of Technology Management and Mechanical Engineering. In addition to her research on economically and environmentally sustainable waste recovery systems and operations, Dr. Kongar devotes time to improving the participation of women in engineering as a faculty advisor for the Society of Women Engineers and through various grant and research projects.

Kristen Langlois is a Senior Engineer for Innovation Management at Covidien. As the liaison with the Connecticut Technology Council, Ms. Langlois hosts annual Girls of Innovation events. She is a committee leader for Covidien’s internal Women’s Leadership Alliance and a mentor working with the Soledad O’Brien and Brad Raymond Foundation.

Kimberly McLean is a Principal Engineer at Electric Boat. For the past 16 years, Ms. McLean has volunteered for the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, developing her own annual events and activities. She is also a founding member of the Society for Women Engineers New England Shoreline Section.

The winner of the award is selected by the Science Center’s **Women in Science** steering committee, a group of community leaders who are already transforming the possibilities for women in the sciences through their own work and advocacy.

"These women represent the best in Connecticut in the STEM fields. They are excellent mentors and true teachers. They help many others learn sciences, which creates a stronger and more vibrant society for all of us," said Dr. William Petit. "They are truly kind and selflessly help others -- much as Jennifer, Hayley and Michaela did during their lives. The Petit Family Foundation is honored to be associated with them and the Connecticut Science Center."

The Connecticut Science Center is dedicated to lifelong learning through interactive and innovative experiences that explore our changing world through science. The Green Gala is the Connecticut Science Center's signature annual event for science learning. Drawing more than 50 sponsors and 700 guests, event proceeds fund the Science Center's work to bring scientific concepts alive for children and adults. Since opening in 2009, more than 1.3 million people have been served by the organization's exciting and educational programming.

The Green Gala features delicious tapas dining on every floor, full bars and dancing. Tickets are \$175 each and available on the Science Center's website at www.CTScienceCenter.org/gala. Benefactor ticketholders (\$250 each) are invited to a pre-event President's Champagne Reception from 6 PM to 7 PM, prior to the event. President's Reception attendees will be joined by honored guest Jared Cohen and receive a signed copy of his best-seller, *The New Digital Age*. The Leadership Awards for Science Education and Women in Science will be presented at 9:45 PM.

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About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving more than 1,300,000 people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features 165 hands-on exhibits in 10 galleries and a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store and café, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is also home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, providing powerful professional development for educators. More information: www.CTScienceCenter.org or 860.SCIENCE.

About the Petit Family Foundation The Petit Family Foundation honors the memories of Jennifer Hawke-Petit, Hayley Elizabeth Petit, and Michaela Rose Petit by continuing the kindness, idealism, and activism that defined their lives. The Foundation's funds are given to foster the education of young people, especially women in the science; to improve the lives of those affected by chronic illness; and to support efforts to protect and help those affected by violence. www.PetitFamilyFoundation.org

About Celebrating Women in Science Initiative The Connecticut Science Center's ***Celebrating Women in Science*** Initiative draws attention to the accomplishments of women in the sciences as well as inspire girls and young women to pursue interests in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields of study and career paths. The initiative is a joint effort with the **Petit Family Foundation**, which has joined with the Science Center as the Founding Sponsor of this initiative.