Press Release NCWIT

CHS Student and Teacher Recognized with the NCWIT Aspirations in Computing Award

The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) holds its Award for Aspirations in Computing each year to honor high school women who are active and interested in computing and technology. The organization provides a long-term community for female technologists from all over the US and its territories, encouraging them to pursue their passions. The competition has young women outline their contributions to the community in a technological way and write reflections showing growth and focus for the future. Cranford High School is proud to announce our student award recipient, senior Marisa Sigas, who has received this honor for the second year in a row.

Marisa Sigas received Honorable Mention for the New Jersey Affiliate Award for 2016 and 2017. Marisa is the student leader of the Webmaster Team at Cranford High School where she organizes 7 other students, assigns projects and handles deadlines for our 250+ page website. She has taken the AP Computer Science class, and is currently taking the AP CS Principles course as it goes through its pilot year. She is also actively involved in the performing arts and wishes to continue to do so along with her computing studies in college. Marisa says, "It is an honor to be a part of such a wonderful and supportive community of women in STEM fields."

Marisa's computer science teacher, Richard Bell, is the recipient of the NJ NCWIT Award for Aspirations in Computing Educator Award for his work encouraging women in technology. Mr. Bell has been teaching at Cranford for 14 years, and he has been focusing on building up the computer science program. Mr. Bell said about the progress, "It started with word of mouth, but then we incorporated the Hour of Code Event 4 years ago. Our veteran computer science students spoke with the Freshman Seminar classes to let them know what the computer science classes were all about. The CS students even demonstrated their projects and the freshmen were hooked!" There are now eight computer classes a day in the computer lab, and the AP Computer Science class is made up of 50% women.

Both Marisa Sigas and Richard Bell are active in volunteering in the Cranford area, helping people of all ages become more familiar with technology. They have worked with the local Girl Scout Troops, showing some of the basics of computers, running Hour of Code events, and reviewing Internet Safety. Additionally, the Computer Honors Society, the after school club that Mr. Bell advises and of which Marisa is the treasurer, volunteers at the Atria Assisted Living Home to show residents how to use their phones and laptops.

Marisa and Mr. Bell will be honored at the NCWIT Aspirations in Computing Awards Ceremony on April 4th at Kean University.