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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center Announces 2024 Award Honorees ***STEM Achievement and Women in Science Awards Honorees to be recognized at Annual Gala***

Hartford, CT (August 20, 2024) – The Connecticut Science Center is delighted to announce the honorees of the 2024 STEM Achievement Awards and the Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Awards. These exceptional individuals will be recognized at the Connecticut Science Center's Annual Gala: Close Encounters of the STEM Kind on Saturday, October 5. All honorees were selected due to their significant contributions and leadership in STEM fields, showcasing their dedication to advancing science and inspiring future innovators.

"We are proud to recognize and celebrate the remarkable achievements of our 2024 STEM Achievement Awards and Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Awards honorees." Said Matt Fleury, Connecticut Science Center President & CEO "Their innovation, dedication, and leadership are not only advancing their fields, but also inspiring the next generation of scientists and leaders. These honorees exemplify the transformative power of STEM, and we are honored to shine a spotlight on their extraordinary contributions to science and society."

The **2024 STEM Achievement Awards** are presented to an individual, group or organization contributing to STEM in the region, opening STEM Careers to diverse audiences, and impacting STEM Education in the community. New this year, the Theodore S. Sergi K-12 Educator of the Year Award recognizes an exceptional K-12 Educator who is making significant contributions to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning in their classroom.

The 2024 Honorees are:

- **Industry Innovator** | USA Waste & Recycling
- **Lifetime Achievement Award in Innovation** | Mark. R Gurvich, Ph.D, Senior Fellow, Structure Analysis, Collins Aerospace – An RTX Business
- **Innovator to Watch** | Molli Bennett, Welder, Habco Industries, LLC
- **Non-Profit Organization** | Petals and S.T.E.M.
- **Higher Education Honoree** | Dr. Florian Carle, Institute Manager, Yale Quantum Institute
- **Student Honoree** | Jonathan Plona, Senior, Wolcott High School
- **Dr. Theodore S. Sergi K-12 Educator of the Year** | Dr. Michelle A. Bellinger, Faculty of Physics and Engineering, Academy of Aerospace and Engineering

The **2024 Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Awards** recognizes a professional woman and a student who are leaders in their chosen STEM field. The honorees were selected by the Women in Science Steering Committee based on their demonstrated commitment to advancing STEM through thoughtful engagement with diverse audiences and by making a significant effort to support other women and girls in their pursuit of STEM as learners, teachers, and professionals.

The 2024 Honorees are:

- **Women in Science Leadership Award** | Dr. Nicole Wagner, CEO, LambdaVision, Inc.
- **Women in Science Leadership Youth Award** | Natalia V. Torres, Senior, Bloomfield High School, Connecticut Science Center Teen Innovation Participant

“On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Petit Family Foundation, I am ecstatic that Dr. Nicole Wagner and Ms. Natalia Torres are being recognized for their dedication and passion in science with the Petit Family Foundation’s Women in Science Leadership Awards.” Said Dr. William Petit, Jr., President of the Petit Family Foundation, “Dr. Wagner’s efforts to treat and potentially cure retinal diseases while mentoring many young women are inspirational. Natalia’s work through high school is impressive and portends a productive future. I have profound respect for both of them and the work they do for our community.”

For more information on the Connecticut Science Center Annual Awards, visit CTScienceCenter.org/Awards.

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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 4.3 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries, covering 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 the state’s only year-round butterfly habitat, five educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, 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 the home to the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers, offering powerful professional development for educators. More information: CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.