

UL and North American Association for Environmental Education Announce 2018 Innovative Education Award Winners

Environmental STEM (E-STEM) Award Program Donates One Million Dollars Since 2014 Launch

NORTHBROOK, Ill. and WASHINGTON, D.C.- Aug. 01, 2018 – Underwriters Laboratories (UL NFP), in partnership with the [North American Association for Environmental Education](#) (NAAEE), today announced five recipients of this year’s annual [UL Innovative Education Award](#) (ULIEA). These non-profit organizations have made a difference in their communities through their work to advance environmental education through STEM principles (E-STEM). As a result, they will each receive a monetary award between \$25,000 and \$100,000 and join an impressive network of likeminded ULIEA alumni. In addition, the winners will work with UL employees, including science, engineering, technology and marketing experts, to help build upon their existing successes.

This year’s grand prize winner and recipient of \$100,000 is Oakland-based [Techbridge Girls](#). Serving hundreds of girls across several states, the Techbridge Girls ChangeMakers program opens up the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to girls from low-income communities with hands-on environmental projects. From cleaning up a mock oil spill to learning about water filtration, Techbridge Girls’ curriculum activates E-STEM for its participants with real-world applications.

“Techbridge Girls is honored to be recognized by the UL Innovative Education Award, and we’re excited to leverage this award to better the future of girls across the country through high-quality STEM education opportunities,” said Techbridge Girls CEO Nikole Collins-Puri.

The other four 2018 award winners include:

- [Ocean Discovery Institute](#) (\$50,000 award recipient): A San Diego-based non-profit that uses the ocean to empower students (third grade through college) from a single urban community to become tomorrow’s scientific and conservation leaders through tuition-free science education.
- [Sweet Water Foundation](#) (\$50,000 award recipient): A Chicago-based non-profit that empowers youth to better understand the urban ecological environment and take the reins in improving their communities through gardening, urban farming, neighborhood beautification and more.
- [‘Alala Reintroduction Community Inquiry Program](#) (\$25,000 award recipient): Spearheaded by San Diego Zoo Global, this program provides Hawaii-based students with the opportunity to help reintroduce the ‘Alala (Hawaiian Crow) that is currently extinct in the wild, while also learning about its ecological significance.
- [Groundswell Michigan](#) (\$25,000 award recipient): An initiative based at the Grand Valley State University College of Education in Michigan that supports educators who want to move beyond classroom walls to teach students about real-world problem-solving in the environment.

ULIEA is open each year to non-profit organizations in the U.S. and Canada that advance E-STEM, sustainable communities and youth empowerment. This year, there were applicants from 33 U.S. states and three Canadian provinces. The proposals submitted as part of the 2018 program were particularly impressive and exhibited the measurable impact each program has had on its participants.

“We are thrilled to celebrate the 2018 Innovative Education Award winners for their efforts to elevate E-STEM in their communities and empower youth to become changemakers through environmental problem-solving,” said Cara Gizzi, VP of Education and Outreach, Underwriters Laboratories. “These five organizations join a group of past ULIEA winners who have an opportunity to collaborate with one another to further extend E-STEM education and opportunities for today’s youth.”

ULIEA annually awards \$250,000 to organizations that demonstrate effective educational benefits and community engagement. Past winners have promoted E-STEM in a variety of ways, including teaching youth about sustainability and agriculture in urban environments, building science labs in urban public schools using hydroponic farming technology, providing hands-on education programming onboard

“floating classrooms,” teaching students the skills to achieve zero waste standards in cafeterias, and much more. This year marks the millionth dollar donated to deserving non-profit education organizations since the program’s inception four years ago.

Previous winners have used the award money in a variety of ways to extend their reach, scale their programs or launch new learning initiatives. For instance, SPARK, a nature-based family learning program that operates as a part of Chincoteague Bay Field Station, was able to purchase a mini-bus to help transport families on Virginia’s Eastern Shore and ensure they have consistent access to the program and opportunities to participate. Another past winner, NY Sun Works, an organization that builds innovative science labs in urban schools, used the award to build an online learning center that hosts K-12 grade Discovering Sustainability Science curriculum, training videos, and other resources to help teachers and educators make the most of the program.

“This year’s winners are leading the charge in providing innovative and accessible learning opportunities to youth in need,” said Christiane Maertens, deputy director for NAAEE. “We’re proud to celebrate the fourth year of our partnership with UL NFP and look forward to meeting the leaders of these inspiring organizations in person.”

The 2018 winners will convene Aug. 8-10, 2018 for a leadership summit. The summit provides the opportunity to meet other winners, share best practices, network with other winning organizations and work with professionals from UL and NAAEE to further their causes.

To learn more about the UL Innovative Education Award, please visit ulinnovationeducation.naaee.net.

About Underwriters Laboratories

Underwriters Laboratories (UL NFP) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to progressing public safety, security and wellbeing through scientific knowledge. As a 501(c)3 public charity, the UL NFP advances the UL public safety mission through independent research, standards, education, and outreach. We convene stakeholders to broadly share data-driven knowledge and collaborate to champion adoption.

About UL

UL fosters safe living and working conditions for people everywhere through the application of science to solve safety, security and sustainability challenges. The UL Mark engenders trust enabling the safe adoption of innovative new products and technologies. Everyone at UL shares a passion to make the world a safer place. We test, inspect, audit, certify, validate, verify, advise and train and we support these efforts with software solutions for safety and sustainability. To learn more about us, visit UL.com.

About NAAEE

For four decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of education. NAAEE supports a network of 20,000 educators and 56 regional affiliate organizations working in environmental education in more than 30 countries. Each year, over one thousand environmental education professionals from around the world gather to learn and network at NAAEE’s annual conference.

###