



Harshini Mukundan selected as AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador

September 9, 2019

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., Sept. 9, 2019—Los Alamos National Laboratory bioscientist Harshini Mukundan has been selected as one of the 125 AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) IF/THEN Ambassadors. IF/THEN, a national initiative of Lyda Hill Philanthropies, seeks to further women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by empowering current innovators and inspiring the next generation of pioneers.

“I am delighted, honored and humbled to be chosen as an AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador,” said Mukundan, “this provides me with an opportunity to promote science education and STEM careers in girls and women, and help develop a more diverse and stronger science community!”

Mukundan has been active in STEM education and promotion, participating in Los Alamos National Laboratory programs such as Careers and Curiosity, Expanding Your Horizons, Cafe Scientifique, Science on Tap, Los Alamos Frontiers in Science series and others, with the intent of spreading STEM awareness and confidence among girls and women. This ambassadorship allows her to take these STEM efforts further, and promote education and science among girls and women in New Mexico and beyond.

“We firmly believe that if we support a woman in STEM, then she can change the world,” said Lyda Hill, founder of Lyda Hill Philanthropies. “The goal of IF/THEN is to shift the way our country—and the world—think about women in STEM and this requires changing the narratives about women STEM professionals and improving their visibility.”

To achieve this goal, AAAS IF/THEN Ambassadors will connect with students in person and through various media platforms, including popular YouTube channels and network television shows. The ambassadors are contemporary role models who represent a diversity of STEM-related professions in the United States, from entertainment, fashion, sports, business and academia.

“AAAS is deeply committed to advancing education and opportunities for girls and women in STEM,” said Margaret Hamburg, chair of the AAAS Board of Directors. “This partnership enables us to reach more deeply into STEM education and help advance STEM careers for women and girls. It will help us to elevate the voices of women working in STEM fields and to inspire the next generation of girls and women in science.”

Mukundan grew up in India, where she graduated with a bachelor's and master's degrees in microbiology. She then came to the United States where she obtained a PhD in biomedical sciences, becoming the first person in her family to graduate with a doctoral degree. She came to Los Alamos as a National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellow and continued as a staff scientist in Chemistry division. Today, Mukundan is a team leader and deputy group leader at Los Alamos, and she is passionate about mentoring students, postdoctoral fellows and young scientists and has been recognized for her commitment as a mentor.

In October, AAAS IF/THEN Ambassadors will participate in the IF/THEN Summit in Dallas to take their outreach to the next level by learning from each other and receiving resources and coaching in science communication and effective STEM storytelling. The IF/THEN Collection, a digital asset library of photos and custom content, will be created as a tool to increase the number of accurate and powerful images of real women and girls in STEM. The robust collection can be accessed by media, educators and non-profit organizations as they develop and share inspiring content and curriculum.

AAAS IF/THEN Ambassadors were selected through a rigorous selection process. Candidates were evaluated for overall excellence with a focus on the following:

- contributions to their STEM-related field, commensurate with their career stage;
- demonstrated experience and abilities in STEM communication and public engagement via media, classroom, and public programs; and
- commitment to inspiring middle-school girls to be the next generation of STEM pioneers.

The IF/THEN Girls Advisory Council, comprising more than 150 10- to 18-year-old girls from around the country, also participated in the Ambassador selection process.

For a complete list of Ambassadors, go to www.ifthenshecan.org/ambassadors.

About IF/THEN

IF/THEN is part of Lyda Hill Philanthropies' commitment to fund game-changing advancements in science and nature. IF/THEN® seeks to further advance women in STEM by empowering current innovators and inspiring the next generation of pioneers. Rooted in a firm belief that there is no better time to highlight positive and successful female professional role models, IF/THEN is designed to activate a culture shift among young girls to open their eyes to STEM careers by: (1) funding and elevating women in STEM as role models, (2) convening cross-sector partners in entertainment, fashion, sports, business and academia to illuminate the importance of STEM everywhere, and (3) inspiring girls with better portrayals of women in STEM through media and learning experiences to pique their interest in STEM careers. To learn more, visit www.ifthenshecan.org or follow IF/THEN on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Lyda Hill Philanthropies

Lyda Hill Philanthropies encompasses the charitable giving of founder Lyda Hill who believes that "science is the answer" to life's most challenging issues and is committed to funding transformational advances in science and nature. To learn more, visit www.lydahillphilanthropies.org.

About AAAS

The American Association for the Advancement of Science ([AAAS](#)) is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal [Science](#), as well as Science Translational Medicine; Science Signaling; a digital, open-access journal, Science Advances; Science Immunology; and Science Robotics. AAAS was founded in 1848 and includes more than 250 affiliated societies and academies of science, serving 10 million individuals. Science has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world. The nonprofit AAAS is open to all and fulfills its mission to "advance science and serve society" through initiatives in science policy, international programs, science education, public engagement and more.

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