



85 Prescott Street  
Worcester, MA 01605-2610

(508) 831-5859  
FAX: (508) 831-5880

## **Mass Academy Student Wins Top Prize At State Science Fair**

*Junior Earns Genzyme Award At Massachusetts State Science, Engineering Fair*

WORCESTER, MASS. – May 4, 2015 – A junior at the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI won the top award for her research involving cell phones at the Massachusetts State Science & Engineering Fair.

Yashaswini Makaram, of Northboro, Mass., earned the top prize, overall, out of 300 projects, winning the Genzyme Award and \$10,000, a \$2,500 research internship, a \$10,000 science grant for Mass Academy, and a professional development grant of \$5000 for her school mentor. Her project was titled, “*The Phoney Lift: Using Accelerometers to Identify People*.” Her researchable question was, “How does attempting to forge a lift movement in cell phone retrieval affect the ability to recognize a user through the signature movement?”

“Being the overall winner was completely unexpected for me,” Makaram said. “I know that there are many other extremely good science projects every year and that is why I was so shocked to realize that I was able to take the top.”

The Massachusetts State Science & Engineering Fair (MSSEF) is committed to increasing awareness of, exposure to, and participation in inquiry-based learning through the development of science and engineering projects by middle school and high school students, and to showcase and celebrate that learning. For more than six decades, MSSEF programs have advanced science literacy and inspired new generations of science and engineering leaders.

Thirteen students from Mass Academy qualified to participate in the fair held May 1-2 at MIT. Nine students, including Makaram, placed first, while two students earned second-place awards, and two students won third-place honors. Among the first place winners was Georgie Botev, of Groton, who earned The 2015 Mathworks Award and \$7,500. Mariam Dogar, of Northborough, also a first-place winner, earned a \$60,000 Northeastern University scholarship; and Shadi Bavar, of Westborough, placed first winning a UMASS Amherst \$20,000 scholarship for scientific achievement.

Other first place winners: Kristen Behrakis, of Dracut, Jackie Forson, of Worcester, Kate Schweikert, of Hopkinton, Evan Solomonides, of Boylston, and Sashrika Saini, of Shrewsbury.

Second place winners are: Aishwarrya Arivudainambi, of Shrewsbury, and Alex Dejeu, of Shrewsbury. Third place winners: Sathya Annisetti, of Westborough, and Sanjey Ganeshan, of Sterling.

-more-

Schweikert said it pleased her to be recognized at the state fair level. “I truly believe the device I engineered could save people’s lives and this was reinforced when I won a first place award,” she said. Her project was developed after she lost a friend due to a medical emergency. Her project’s goal was to engineer an epinephrine auto-injector that immediately contacts emergency medical services after use without compromising its medical functions.

“These MSSEF awards are a testament to the importance of project-based, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) learning that Mass Academy students are exposed to,” said Mass Academy Director Michael G. Barney. “Students leave our school with the tools needed to conduct research at the college level.”

### **About Mass Academy**

Mass Academy is a public, co-educational school of excellence that enrolls about 100 academically accelerated 11th and 12th graders. Math and science are emphasized within a comprehensive, interactive academic program. The rigor of the junior year classes exceeds high school honors and AP, emphasizing depth over breadth, engaging students in project-based learning, and more than 1,100 hours of instruction. Seniors complete a full year of college, enrolling in classes at WPI, a nationally ranked university, thus making the Academy the only public school in Massachusetts whose students attend a private university full time as seniors in high school. The Academy is a collaborative effort among the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and the high schools of Massachusetts.

#