14-year-old from California named America's Top Young Scientist

3M and Discovery Education recognize America's Top Young Scientist and Improving Lives Award winners at the 15th annual 3M Young Scientist Challenge

ST. PAUL, Minn. and CHARLOTTE, N.C., Oct. 19, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- 3M (@3M) and Discovery Education (@DiscoveryEd) have named Leanne Fan, a 9th grader at Westville High School in Poway Unified School District in San Diego, Calif., the winner of the 2022 3M Young Scientist Challenge (#YoungScientist), the nation's premier middle school science competition. As the 3M Young Scientist Challenge grand prize winner, Leanne received a $25,000 cash prize, the prestigious title of "America's Top Young Scientist" and a special destination trip.

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Now in its fifteenth year, the 2022 3M Young Scientist Challenge hosted the two-day competition on Oct. 17 and 18 at 3M global headquarters in St. Paul, Minn. This year's winner competed against eight other finalists, each was evaluated through a series of interactive challenges and the final presentation of their innovation. These young inventors earned top spots in the competition through their innovative thinking, scientific acumen and exceptional communication skills.

The world sees 700 million cases of mid-ear infections and nearly 21,000 deaths annually. Leanne's invention, Finsen Headphones, looks to provide an antibiotic free, low-cost option to detect and treat a mid-ear infection using machine learning and blue light therapy. The use of Finsen Headphones could potentially reduce the number of children who suffer from hearing loss by up to 60 percent.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this next generation of scientific leaders. Each of this year's finalists demonstrates the power of science to improve lives and the communities we live in," said Karina Chavez, senior vice president, and chief strategy officer at 3M. "Congratulations to this year's Top Young Scientist, Leanne Fan, and all the finalists. Your dedication, ingenuity and innovative spirit are inspiring to us all."

The competition's public voting component recognized Harini Venkatesh as this year's Improving Lives Award recipient, honoring the project that has the greatest potential to make a positive impact on the world. Harini's project, The Comptometrist, is a cost-efficient solution that cuts down the time needed to determine myopic power in a patient's eyes. Her prototype would eliminate crowding in clinics, report accurate measures of myopic power in seconds and closes the window of error in the eye examination process.

The second and third place winners each receive a $1,000 prize and a special destination trip. These exceptional students are:

In second place, Harini Venkatesh from Brentwood, N.H., a 9th grader at Phillips Exeter School.
In third place, Shanza Sami from Iowa City, Iowa, a 9th grader at West High School in the Iowa City Community School District. Shanza designed a five-stage air pollution filtration device.

The fourth through ninth place winners each receive a $1,000 prize. These finalists, in alphabetical order by last

name, are:

John Lee from Oviedo, Fla., a 9th grader at Hagerty High School in Seminole County Public School District.
Samaira Mehta from Santa Clara, Calif., a 9th grader at Archbishop Mitty High School, Private.
Amritha Praveen from Buffalo Grove, Ill., an 8th grader at Aptakisic Junior High School in Aptakisic-Tripp Community Consolidated School District 102.
Sahasra Swargam from Portland, Ore., a 9th grader at West View High School in Beaverton School District.
Asvini Thivakaran from Round Rock, Texas, an 8th grader at Cedar Valley Middle School in Round Rock Independent School District.
Daniel Thomas from Colleyville, Texas, a 9th grader at Colleyville Heritage High School in Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District.

Unique to the 3M Young Scientist Challenge, finalists are paired with a 3M scientist who mentors and works with them one-on-one to transform their idea from concept to prototype. This year's winner was paired with Dr. Ross Behling, a research specialist in the corporate research material laboratory division at 3M.

"Discovery Education and 3M have had the honor of fostering the next generation of leaders for the last 15 years through the 3M Young Scientist Challenge and the Young Scientist Lab program," said Amy Nakamoto, general manager of social impact at Discovery Education. "Each participant has highlighted how STEM thinking can solve real-world problems in areas such as health, safety, mobility, energy consumption and environmental health. This year's participants demonstrate the spirit of discovery and innovation in today's young people."

In its fifteenth year, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge continues to inspire and challenge middle school students to think creatively and apply the power of STEM to discover real-world solutions. America's Top Young Scientists have gone on to give TED Talks, file patents, found nonprofits, make the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, ring the bell at the New York Stock Exchange and exhibit at the White House Science Fair. These young innovators have also been named Time Magazine's first Kid of the Year, featured in The New York Times Magazine, Forbes and Business Insider, and have appeared on national television programs such as Good Morning America, The Ellen DeGeneres Show and more. In addition, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge Alumni Network began in the fall of 2022 and welcomes more than 100 former challenge finalists and winners for networking and grant award opportunities.

The award-winning 3M Young Scientist Challenge supplements the 3M and Discovery Education program – Young Scientist Lab – which provides no-cost dynamic digital resources for students, teachers and families to explore, transform and innovate the world around them. All the resources are also available through the Young Scientist Lab Channel and in the Social Impact Partnerships channel on Discovery Education's recently enhanced K-12 learning platform.

To download images from the 2022 science competition, click here. To learn more about the 3M Young Scientist Challenge and meet this year's winners and finalists, visit youngscientistlab.com.

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