



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

# Great Minds in STEM Announces STEM Hero and Luminary Award Winners for 2024

*Washington, DC, August 22, 2024* – Great Minds in STEM is proud to announce the outstanding STEM professionals selected to receive Luminary and STEM Hero Awards in 2024!

Luminary Award recipients are remarkable engineers, scientists and technology professionals who represent corporate and government agencies from multiple industries and sectors. This distinction honors their achievements leading, collaborating and initiating key programs and research in their respective fields.

The STEM Hero Awards honor professionals from at the many agencies, research laboratories and technical commands that fall under the direction of either the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

All Luminary and STEM Hero honorees emerged from the highly competitive HENAAC Award peer-review selection process. This year, the Selection Committee recommended six STEM Heroes and 24 Luminaries join the class of 2024 professional honorees. All honorees will receive their awards at the 2024 GMiS Conference, “Answering the Call,” November 6-9, 2024, in Fort Worth, Texas.



## 2024 STEM Hero Award Winners

**LTC Rebecca B. Williams**  
ARMY FUTURES COMMAND  
U.S. ARMY

**Nivia Colón-Díaz, Ph.D.**  
AIR FORCE RESEARCH LABORATORY  
U.S. AIR FORCE

**TSgt Aaron R. Rasch**  
SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE  
U.S. AIR FORCE

**Thomas J. Bueno**  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
U.S. ARMY

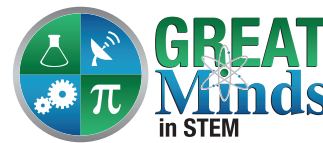
**Christopher J. Casillas**  
AIR FORCE LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT CENTER  
U.S. AIR FORCE

**MSgt Therriion A Grooms**  
LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE  
U.S. AIR FORCE

(Continue to next page for 2024 Luminary Award Winners)

# Press Release

August 22, 2024



## 2024 Luminary Award Winners

**Karen Abarca**  
NORTHROP GRUMMAN

**Juliana Serafim Francisco**  
DOW

**Veronica G. Melesse Vergara**  
OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY

**Claribel Acevedo-Velez, Ph.D.**  
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO, MAYAGÜEZ

**Joann Naim Gerena**  
LOCKHEED MARTIN

**Jose G. Mendez**  
NASA GLENN RESEARCH CENTER

**Almaris Alonso-Claudio, Ph.D.**  
U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

**Daniela Gil**  
LOCKHEED MARTIN

**Felipe Polo-Garzon, Ph.D.**  
OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY

**Samantha Corriero**  
BOEING

**Alejandro Lerza**  
CHEVRON

**Gabriel Ruscalleda**  
CHEVRON

**Rachid Darbali-Zamora, Ph.D.**  
SANDIA NATIONAL LABORATORIES

**Miguel Matta**  
LOCKHEED MARTIN

**Glenda Valero de Silano**  
CHEVRON

**Gustavo E. Delcampo**  
RAYTHEON/RTX

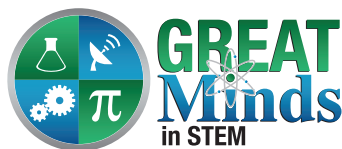
**Kyle A. McDonald, Ph.D.**  
DOW

**Adriana Velasquez**  
SHELL USA, INC.

**Joshua D. Easley**  
RAYTHEON/RTX

**Laura Medina, D.C.Sc**  
RAYTHEON/RTX

**Victor Zapata**  
DOW



**About Great Minds in STEM (GMiS):** Great Minds in STEM is a national nonprofit organization established in 1989 to inspire, support, and recognize students and professionals, especially those from underserved communities, in order to expand and strengthen America's talent pool of Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Medical (STEMM) professionals. For 36 years, GMiS has pioneered programs and initiatives that have helped build a STEMM workforce that fully reflects the rich diversity of our nation, including in-classroom pre-college engagement, college scholarships, academic advocacy, professional partnerships, and national recognition events.



**About the GMiS Conference:** Great Minds in STEM's annual Conference is the organization's flagship event. First held in 1989 in Houston, Texas, and renewed every year since, the conference features executive forums, seminars, competitive programs, networking sessions, and an all-day Career and Graduate School fair. The 4-day event is attended by over 3,000 STEM students and professionals annually and will culminate with the HENAAC Awards Show Saturday, November 9th at the Fort Worth Convention Center. 2024 will mark the first GMiS Conference to be held in the city of Fort Worth, and the first conference in Texas since 2008.

For media inquiries about honorees, please contact: Peter Mellado, Director of Recognition Events, at [pmellado@greatmindsinstem.org](mailto:pmellado@greatmindsinstem.org)

Note to editors: High-resolution photos of the GMiS logo are available upon request

###