

HCTC students selected for summer research internship

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ELLSWORTH — Two Hancock County Technical Center students, Katherine Gell and Elizabeth Leaf, have been selected to join high school students from around the country to attend a paid summer research internship in the Aspirnaut program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville Tenn.

Gell and Leaf are students in HCTC's BioMedical Research Support Program. The program explores techniques and technological applications in biomedical research. The pair are also enrolled in Bridge Academy Maine, a program to bring early college programming to career and technical education in Maine.

Aspirnaut Summer Research Internships are hands-on and mentored laboratory experiences for high school students interested in a career in the fields of science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Participants reside for six weeks on the campus of Vanderbilt University and conduct biomedical research at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Interns are paid a stipend for the time they work in the lab, provided room and board and given the opportunity to interact with university faculty and administrators. Students have been involved in research ranging from understanding diabetic kidney disease and breast cancer to designing microfluidic devices with engineers.

"We are thrilled to welcome Katherine Gell and Elizabeth Leaf into the Aspirnaut Summer Research Internship Program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Their motivation, interest in science and college-level courses through Bridge Academy Maine make them excellent candidates," said Rachel Baugh, associate director of Aspirnaut.

Aspirnauts (as the students are called) engage in various professional development and enrichment opportunities. These include one-on-one individualized career planning sessions, college planning, ACT/SAT prep, networking opportunities with high-profile professionals in the scientific community and cultural and social activities.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Sarah Petroulis, HCTC BioMedical Research instructor. She went on to say, "The opportunity for our students to conduct original research at a premier medical school will open doors for them the rest of their lives."

"I am so proud of Sarah Petroulis and her work in developing this program and preparing her students for these amazing opportunities that will undoubtedly change their lives," said Amy Boles, director of Hancock County Technical Center. "Career and technical education, coupled with Bridge Academy college classes, is preparing students for rigorous postsecondary education as well as the world of work. The old adage and stereotype of CTE (career and technical education) has to become a thing of the past. All students should feel they have the opportunity to access these amazing programs and that they can achieve whatever they put their minds to."

Bridge Academy Maine is proud to partner with the Aspirnaut program to bring this opportunity to our partner schools in Maine," said Brian Langley, executive director of Bridge Academy Maine. He also noted, "Bridge Academy Maine and the Aspirnaut program are prime examples of how to bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary by providing a seamless pathway for students to a high wage-high demand job here in Maine."