

ARCS

ARCS PITTSBURGH NEWSLETTER MIDSUMMER 2025

Message from the Presidents

THE CHALLENGE SET AT THE START OF THIS YEAR was for us to find resilience, develop a course of action, and make practical adjustments so we could continue playing an essential role in supporting our scholars—the next generation of STEM leaders; attract new members; and foster a willingness to serve within our chapter. Thanks to your response to our member survey, we have made significant progress in aligning our actions to be more strategic. This makes us think of a new word for the months ahead—energized.

Our scholars need our support now more than ever as changes to federal funding continue to create uncertainty about their ability to complete their research. The feedback from our current scholars regarding ARCS's impact has been positive. Our financial support has allowed them to attend conferences, present papers, and cover the necessary fees to publish their research in nationally recognized journals. See the article by **Sam**

Nance, who recently completed her third year as an ARCS Scholar, for her perspective. The scholars also appreciate informal social events to connect with other scholars, alumni, and members for networking and stress relief.

Elizabeth Hobbs, one of our long-standing chapter members, generously donated money to help cover the costs of food and beverages for these gatherings, which is greatly appreciated!

CMU and Pitt are fortunately still able to bring in new students for their PhD programs. Our chapter was able to support ten new scholars this year, which will add to our existing second and third year scholars for a total of twenty-seven currently supported. We are excited to introduce some of them to you in this newsletter.

We've gained five new members since January, for a total of ten new members for this fiscal year. This is a result of broadening the awareness of ARCS to our network of women interested in Standing Strong with Science. Read on about our recent programs, which were engaging and inspirational about what's happening right here in Pittsburgh. We encourage you to bring a friend to an upcoming event.

Congratulations to our own **Beth Wainwright** for completing a productive two-year term as ARCS National President. To use a phrase put forth by Beth—"We Are ARCSOME!" Enjoy the summer, relax, and join us this fall, energized and ready to assist with our chapter's mission as our support of scientific research is more critical than ever!

“Our scholars need our support now more than ever as changes to federal funding continue to create uncertainty about their ability to complete their research.”

With gratitude,

Anne & Linda

Co-Presidents

ARCS Foundation

Pittsburgh Chapter



ARCS Event/Program Recaps

ARCS Pittsburgh offers a variety of events for our members, our guests, and the broader community. These include behind-the-scenes tours of cutting-edge research and innovation sites, conversations with global leaders on critical topics, and social gatherings with fellow members, scholars, and alumni at unique venues. Stay connected and be inspired by the engines driving our region's future!

Scholar Showcase

On May 9th the ARCS Pittsburgh chapter celebrated our scholars at the Frick Environmental Center in Squirrel Hill. Each of the third year scholars made a presentation about their research accomplishments that was not only enlightening but easy to understand. Well done!

Our chapter gave **Emani Hunter** and **Lili Chen** the Jeanne Berdik Scholar Achievement Award for

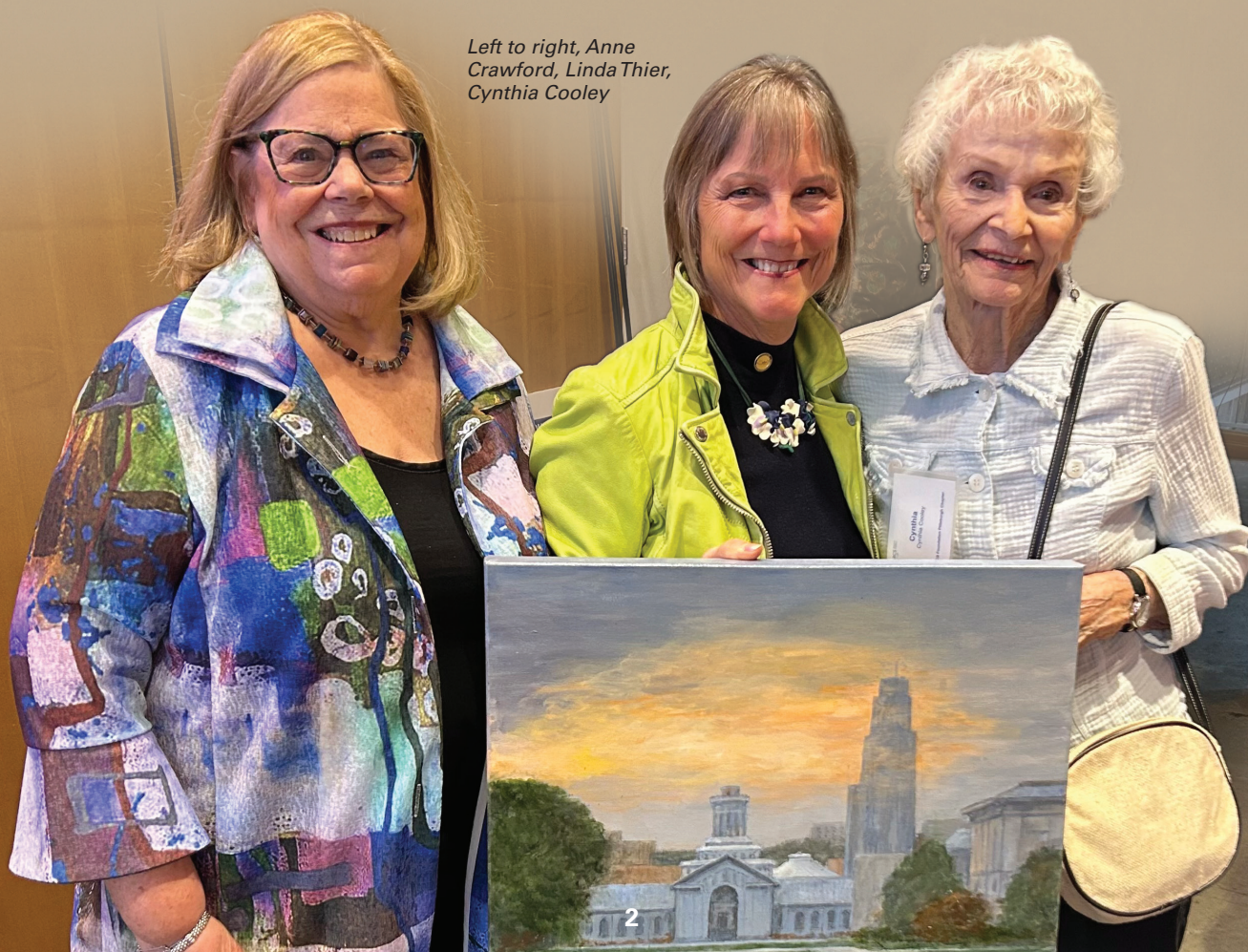
their outstanding research. Emani's interdisciplinary research at the University of Pittsburgh focuses on combining neural engineering and brain imaging expertise to address dementia. Lili's work at Carnegie Mellon University involves sequential decision-making, reinforcement learning, and generative models.



ARCS Pittsburgh Scholars

The evening was capped off with a live auction for an original painting featuring iconic buildings from Pitt and CMU by renowned artist and ARCS member **Cynthia Cooley**. **Linda Thier** was thrilled to be the successful bidder. Many thanks to Cynthia who has

Left to right, Anne Crawford, Linda Thier, Cynthia Cooley





Painting by Cynthia Cooley

so generously donated several pieces of original art to raise funds to support our scholars.

Evening Social

On May 29th, ARCS member **Lacey Carroll**

hosted a warm and welcoming evening social at her iconic home in Mt. Lebanon (the Challinor House, an outstanding example of mid-century modern architecture designed by **Alexander Sansosti**). Guests included ARCS members, current scholars, alumni, and friends interested in learning more about ARCS Pittsburgh. As Lacey put it, "Meeting ARCS members and scholars in person is one of the strongest ways friends can learn—and get excited—about our mission."

Alongside delicious appetizers, refreshments, and lively conversation, guests heard updates from ARCS Pittsburgh leadership. Co-presidents **Anne Crawford** and **Linda Thier**, along with treasurer **JoAnn Patross**, shared key chapter news. **Beth Wainwright**, president

of the national ARCS Foundation and a member of the Pittsburgh chapter, enthusiastically presented the inspiring national agenda. She also introduced the new ARCS tagline and logo, *Standing Strong for Science*.

Several members

shared personal stories and highlights from their years with ARCS, adding warmth and humor to the evening. Two first-year ARCS Scholars, **Anna Iacocca** (Carnegie Mellon University) and **Jacqueline Avila** (University of Pittsburgh), spoke about their PhD research—Anna on scoliosis, and Jacqueline on cardiovascular disease—and how the ARCS Award supports their academic journeys in engineering.

Scholar alum **Dr. Stephanie Helman** shared how her ARCS Award was instrumental in her decision to attend the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and to remain in Pittsburgh for her postdoctoral work. She spoke candidly about balancing family life with a PhD program and how the ARCS community provided invaluable support.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all who participated, especially our newest scholars and Dr. Helman. Special thanks to **Lacey Carroll** and the membership committee (co-chairs **Becky McGough** and **Anne Houck**) for organizing such a successful and inspiring recruitment event.

Behind the Science Event

On June 12th, ARCS Pittsburgh and the Magee-Womens Research Institute and Foundation (MWRIF) co-hosted an event titled "Behind the Science: Transforming Women's Health through Pharmaceutical Innovation." Held at MWRI in Oakland, the gathering welcomed more than forty ARCS members and guests for an informative presentation from renowned leaders in women's health.

Dr. Lisa Rohan, professor in the Departments of Pharmaceutical Sciences and OB/GYNE/RS at the University of Pittsburgh, delivered the keynote address. Her pharmaceuticals laboratory within MWRI focuses on developing innovative, safe, effective, and acceptable drug delivery systems that meet the evolving needs of women. Several active research initiatives reflect this mission.

Beth Wainwright, ARCS National President and a proud representative of ARCS Pittsburgh, shared updates on both local and national accomplishments and challenges. **Janice Devine**, MWRIF's vice president of development, provided an overview of the institute's work and highlighted the urgent issues facing science and women's health research today. Within this context especially, ARCS Pittsburgh was pleased to announce that the new Collins/Citrin-Cwenar-ARCS Pittsburgh Member Scholar Award Endowment at the University of Pittsburgh, which will support women's health research.

Another highlight of the evening was the presentation by **Georgia Rae Atkins**, a 2025 ARCS alumna and former Elliott-Hotopp ARCS Pittsburgh Chapter Named Award recipient (2021–24). A PhD



Georgia Rae Atkins
(Photo courtesy of Pam Meadowcroft)

candidate in the Department of OB/GYNE/RS at the University of Pittsburgh, Georgia Rae spoke about her work in translating reproductive biology into viable treatment options. She credited the ARCS award for helping her pursue her passion and integrate into MWRI, which strongly supports her research and career goals. We welcome Georgia Rae and all our ARCS Scholar Alumni to be engaged with the ARCS Pittsburgh community!

The evening concluded with an interactive panel discussion featuring **Dr. Rohan, Beth Wainwright,** and **Janice Devine**, engaging the audience in a timely, thoughtful conversation about the future of women's health research.

Chapter Annual Meeting

The ARCS Pittsburgh Chapter gathered for its annual membership meeting on June 26th at the home of **Lee Friday**. Twenty-five dedicated members attended. They enthusiastically approved the slate of nominations and the budget for 2025–2026. The slate consisted of:

Co-Presidents: **Anne Crawford** and **Linda Thier**

Treasurer: **JoAnn Patross**

Assistant Treasurer: **Angie Maher**

Secretary: **Julia Gleason**

Communications Co-Chairs: **Amy Arner** and **Carol Stockman**

Development: **Jeanne Berdik**

Membership Co-Chairs: **Anne Houck** and **Becky McGough**

Nominating: **Paula Zawakski**

Program Co-Chairs: **Rosemary Mendel** and **Lacey Carroll**

Scholar Relations Co-Chairs: **Leslie Dunn** and **Michelle Zorilla**

University Relations: **Betsy Cwenar**

Jeanne Berdik announced that our chapter will have a new named scholar award honoring **Beth Wainwright**, who has just completed her term as



ARCS Pittsburgh board and committee members

president of ARCS National. Following the business meeting, members engaged in roundtable discussions about one of three inspiring topics: (1) engaging scholar alumni, (2) implementing membership initiatives, and (3) enhancing our social media presence.

Our annual meeting provided a vital opportunity to reflect on our achievements and envision the path ahead and connect while sharing insights from the recent ARCS National board meeting. We hope it will ignite actions that drive positive change for current and past scholars, boost membership in our chapter, provide better brand recognition of our chapter, and advance our fundraising efforts.

Social Media Engagement

DURING OUR RECENT ANNUAL MEETING, members discussed social media engagement. We agreed that it is important for ARCS Pittsburgh to become more active, especially on LinkedIn and Instagram. Increasing our social media presence will help to expand knowledge of our chapter and assist in membership recruitment. It will also highlight our organization's proactive role in advancing scientific and medical research and the support we give future scientists. To be successful, we need members to engage with our posts. **Rosemary Mendel** is tapping a marketing communications firm to provide a tipsheet for members about the basics of social media and a virtual presentation on how to effectively participate.

An Idea Worth Celebrating

By Jeanne Berdik

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SOMETIMES AN IDEA CROSSES YOUR MIND of something that might be fun, adventurous, productive, or otherwise an interesting thing to do. Most ideas stay there—in the recesses of your mind and are never acted upon—for good or bad. Every once in a while, however, the moment is right and the team is a good one and that idea becomes a reality.

This is what happened in May when more than seventy women, including thirteen ARCS Pittsburgh members, representing thirteen Pittsburgh women's organizations met for lunch at the

Pittsburgh Botanic Garden. The idea for this gathering to Celebrate Pittsburgh Women originated a year ago at a Pittsburgh Symphony Association luncheon. A team of several Pittsburgh women,

including ARCS Pittsburgh members **Bev Elliott** and myself as well as **Susan Edwards** and **Nancy Zappala** from the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden board, and **Heather Chronis Danek**, immediately embraced and acted upon the idea.

Organizations in attendance included the Alpha Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; ARCS Foundation Pittsburgh; Child Health Association of Sewickley; Garden Club of Allegheny County; Girl Friends, Inc.; Junior League of Pittsburgh; The Links, Inc.; Ladies Hospital Aid Society; Northeasterns, Inc. Pittsburgh Chapter; Pittsburgh Botanic Garden; Pittsburgh Symphony Association; Women's Committee Carnegie Museum of Art; and Women United.

In addition to ARCS and our focus on scientific education and research, the assembled groups

included those working on health and human services, art and music, education, horticulture/garden design and conservation, civic service, women's leadership, volunteerism, as well as issues that particularly impact the African American and Jewish communities in Pittsburgh. We encourage you to check out these organizations online for a better understanding of the breadth of their individual and collective impact.

Networking across organizational lines was a top objective for the Celebrating Pittsburgh Women gathering and, judging from the noise level of the assembled group, it was eminently successful. A second objective was to introduce these organizations and their members to the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden,

“**The idea for this gathering to Celebrate Pittsburgh Women originated a year ago at a Pittsburgh Symphony Association luncheon.**”

not only as an addition to one's personal “must visit” list but also as a possible venue for meetings and events. This goal also appears to have borne fruit as evidenced by several questions regarding the space available for such gatherings. Finally, we hoped that our speaker, **Doug Heuck**, publisher of the *Pittsburgh Quarterly* and CEO of a new regional initiative, “Pittsburgh Tomorrow,” (<https://pittsburghtomorrow.org>) might provide some basis for further inquiry and conversation as to how the women's organizations of Pittsburgh might be involved in furthering this effort.

Our hope is that many additional “good ideas” might emerge as a result of this celebration of Pittsburgh's women—ideas that each individual organization might pursue but hopefully also ideas for collaboration, interaction, and partnership resulting in many more celebrations in the years to come.

Scholar Award in Honor of Beth Wainwright

ARCS National President **Beth Wainwright** completed her term on June 30. Through her leadership, the national organization launched several new initiatives that are exciting developments for ARCS. Pittsburgh chapter members thought it was only fitting to raise funds for an ARCS Award in her honor to recognize her national service. **Jeanne Berdik** launched a secret fundraising campaign, which raised funds for a full three year scholar award! Thank you to all who contributed and congratulations Beth!



Left to right, Anne Crawford, Beth Wainwright, Linda Thier
(Photo courtesy of Rosemary Mendel)

Program Committee Update

THE ARCS PROGRAM COMMITTEE is working on some exciting events for the new fiscal year. In keeping with the committee's mission to design programming in areas of critical importance, such as medical research and environmental issues, we're planning the following events:

- Interactive event at Pitt's Rehab Neural Engineering Labs (RNEL)
- Presentation and tour at The Pittsburgh Hearing Center at UPMC Eye and Ear Institute
- Presentation at Western Pennsylvania Conservancy at Washington's Landing
- Presentation about artificial intelligence and what we may expect in the future with potential speakers from CMU and Google
- Presentation at the National Aviary



*Pam Meadowcroft speaking at the annual meeting
(Photo courtesy of Anne Crawford)*

We want to include some fun in the lineup, with a possible presentation about the chemistry of beer-making at Burghers Brewing Company. Dates and times will be shared once they are finalized.

ARCS Sparks Award

ARCS SPARKS AWARDS are a public way of saying thank you to someone who has made a difference in our organization. In case you missed it in our national newsletter, **Pam Meadowcroft** received an ARCS Sparks award for all the successful work she has been doing both locally and nationally to

reconnect with our ARCS alumni. Thank you, Pam, for all your efforts! This is a wonderful initiative that will greatly enhance our chapter in so many ways! If you know of someone worthy of special thanks, please contact **Linda Thier** (pittsburgh @arcsfoundation.org) about nominating them.

Save the Date!

Donor Appreciation Event:
September 17th at CMU's Rangos Ballroom

ARCS Fundraising Dinner:
October 7th at Alta Via Market Square



*Jeanne van Briesen
(Photo courtesy of Carnegie Mellon University)*

ARCS Member van Briesen Starts New Role

ARCS PITTSBURGH MEMBER and former CMU professor **Jeanne van Briesen** recently started a new role as the dean of the College of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. In addition to being an ARCS member, she was an ARCS Scholar at Northwestern University from 1992 through 1997. Congratulations Jeanne!

Getting to Know Our New Members

Rachel Phillips is a new Under Age 40 ARCS member. **Linda Thier** invited Rachel as her guest to the “Vaccines: All You Ever Wanted to Know” program. Rachel is employed by Team Pennsylvania and has an expertise in strategic planning. She currently volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters and the United Way/Women United Organization.

Lacey Carroll invited **Katie Cippel** to attend an ARCS recruitment evening at her home on May 29th. Katie is a stay at home mom who lives in McMurray. She enjoyed hearing the ARCS Scholars speak about their research. Because she has an MLIS degree from Pitt, she related to their research methods and the informational organization that is required. Katie joined ARCS as an Under Age 40 member the next week.

Susie DeBor has known ARCS member **Anne Houck** for many years and became familiar with ARCS Pittsburgh through their conversations and

friendship. After attending the Women’s Health program sponsored by the Magee-Women’s Research Institute as a guest, Susie joined ARCS Pittsburgh. She is a former beekeeper and formerly served as a volunteer coordinator for Burgh Bees.

Welcome all!

Membership Renewal

It’s time to renew your membership in ARCS! We hope you consider “stepping up” a level as it is more important than ever to support scientific research in the United States. As a reminder, those of you who participate in an endowment or named award need to separately pay \$175 annually toward the chapter dues. Membership renewals can be made online at <https://pittsburgh.arcsfoundation.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=99> or by mailing a check to ARCS, PO Box 9117, Pittsburgh, PA 15224.

A Letter from an ARCS Scholar

I’VE BEEN AN ARCS SCHOLAR since enrolling at Carnegie Mellon University to study biology, roughly three years ago. It’s been a fun ride. The wonderful women of ARCS have been some of my most reliable cheerleaders as I narrowed my field of study from “biology” to the regulation of growth and development in animals. The biannual events hosted by ARCS have doubled as highlights and milestones when I look back, allowing me to take stock of how far I’ve come with each of you walking alongside me. The support ARCS has given has always been tremendous, but in my last year as a scholar, it has been invaluable.

We live in uncertain times. In the current political climate, science is being devalued. Science funding is being cut; students are suffering for it. ARCS has given me stability when I felt there was none. Through your hard work and

dedication, you have given your scholars a financial and social safety net. You are paying rent, you are buying groceries, and when a third-year biology student reaches out, anxious and unsure, you are grabbing that hand tight. Words cannot convey how much that has meant to me. Thank you.

I finished my time as a scholar in May. ARCS sent me off with a chance to show you what I’ve learned, but since then, I haven’t gone far. Just the other week, I was invited to discuss alumni relations and how to keep helping students, even after we leave the

program. It is exciting to be part of the work and as the fourth year of my PhD approaches, I’m proud to greet it as part of the ARCS community.

Thank you for the three years and many, many more.

Sam Nance



Sam Nance