

## Zara Haque

Zara Haque is a senior at Greenwich High School whose strong desire to share her love for STEM inspires her to engage with her community through STEM-related initiatives and events.

Zara is fascinated by the intersection of science and society and has been conducting independent science research in both social science and environmental science since middle school. Her research on the effects of “Social Capital” (social trust, quantified) on Covid-19 case and mortality rates received national recognition. Most recently, she developed a novel mechanism for the complete degradation of harmful PFAS, carcinogenic “forever chemicals” that are particularly prevalent in the state of Connecticut, into easily repurposed byproducts – chemistry research with public policy and social justice implications.

As Co-Chair of the First Selectman’s Youth Commission of the Town of Greenwich, a community of young people dedicated to promoting and establishing the youth voice in the Town of Greenwich, Zara directs the Annual Greenwich Middle School STEM Fair. The STEM Fair aims to spark middle schoolers’ interest in STEM, provide early exposure to a science fair, and connect middle schoolers with like-minded peers across Greenwich. In 2022, she facilitated the in-person debut of the STEM Fair, and under her leadership, the number of participants in the STEM Fair has tripled. As the inaugural winner of this fair, and now three-time Director of it, it goes without saying that it is incredibly close to her heart.

Zara is also the Founding STEM Coordinator of Greenwich STEM to Stern. STEM to Stern is a national organization working to lower the barriers to crew and STEM education – a mission that resonates with Zara given the pivotal role the pursuit of science research has played in her intellectual journey. As STEM Coordinator of the Greenwich chapter, she creates and teaches science research curriculum to ~40 under-resourced students, who are recruited from the Greenwich Boys & Girls Club. Every spring, these students present their research at the Greenwich Middle School STEM fair.

Zara has been recognized by the YWCA in the past – in April 2024, she received the YWCA Greenwich Gender and Racial Justice Scholarship for her leadership and community service. She has also received the Junior League of Greenwich Community Service Award, the Greenwich Sustainability Committee’s Annual Sustainability Award, and the Connecticut Youth Services Association’s Youth Leadership Award.

Outside of her community service and STEM pursuits, Zara is interested in public policy, international relations, and politics. She has served as Co-President of Greenwich High School's Debate and Model United Nations teams, and was selected by the League of Women Voters as the student moderator for Greenwich's State Senator & Representative Candidate Debate this past October.

**Please answer the following questions:**

**1. What are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of my expansion of the Greenwich Middle School STEM Fair. In my time as Director, I have facilitated the in-person debut of the STEM Fair at the Greenwich Water Club, where it was held for two years. From the first in-person year to the second in-person year, following my recruitment, advertising, and mentorship efforts, the number of participants in the STEM Fair has tripled. This coming May, registration for the STEM Fair is projected to reach 100 projects!

**2. What do wish people knew about you on your journey?**

**3. What makes you most proud about being of service in your community?**

I believe that as a community, we need to uplift both under-resourced students and especially girls (my STEM to Stern cohorts have historically been mostly girls), in conjunction with building a sense of community amongst our youth. And as someone who has benefitted from our community's many resources, I am grateful to have the opportunity to give back. I am proudest of my service to our community when I see my STEM to Stern students become students in Greenwich High School's science research class. I feel fulfilled knowing that after my graduation, my lab seat will likely be passed on to one of my students who might not have considered pursuing high-level, competitive scientific research if not for STEM to Stern.

**Let's have some fun! We'd love to learn something personal about you. We are looking for an interesting fact or words of wisdom that show another side of you. Need some inspiration? Here are some prompts to help you: What's the special sauce that leads to your success? What's a motto that you live by? Some words of advice that have kept you going throughout your life.**

A quote I strive to embody and live by is "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams" (Eleanor Roosevelt).