

SILVERDALE, WA
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PRESS RELEASE

West Sound Technology Association (WSTA) Welcomes
Erin Leigh Howard and Merrill Keating to Its Board of Directors



Erin Leigh Howard



Merrill Keating

West Sound Technology Association (WSTA) is pleased to announce the appointment of two remarkable individuals to its Board of Directors. Erin Leigh Howard, a research scientist at the University of Washington, will serve as the association's Secretary, while Merrill Keating, a young advocate for gender equality, youth leadership, and STEM education, will take on the role of At-Large board member.

Erin Leigh Howard is a research scientist at the University of Washington, helping build and test software pipelines for the Vera Rubin Observatory, an astronomical observatory currently being built in Chile. They are a 2022 graduate of Western Washington University with more than a decade of experience in software and website testing and development. Erin has a passion for bringing accessible science and technology to children and adults alike through their volunteering with West Sound CoderDojo, Girl Scouts, and the Battle Point Astronomical Association. In their spare time, Erin enjoys writing science fiction and bowling.

Merrill Keating is a dynamic 19-year-old advocate for gender equality, youth leadership, and STEM education. She has been a dedicated mentor with West Sound CoderDojo since the age of 10, helping individuals of all ages learn computer programming. Merrill is also a prolific author, having authored three books by the age of 12, with another groundbreaking title, "So You Want to Be a Youth Leader," scheduled for publication.

Founder of Bainbridge Island GirlUp (a chapter of the global United Nations Foundation initiative), Girls Ignited, and The Power of 100 Girls (where she has awarded two grants and is preparing to award a third), Keating has lobbied for the successful passage of the Keeping Girls in School Act, served on the operations team for Reinvented Magazine – the nation's first print magazine by and for girls and women in STEM – and founded and led two TEDx events. A former Teen Council member of Bainbridge Artisan Resource Network (BARN), she was one of 15 students in the Bainbridge Island School District Improvement Plan Process, representing the voice of students on the process which guides the work done at all the schools towards shaping the district's future direction for the Bainbridge Island School District. Keating also hosted Changemakers Summit in March 2022, showcasing female founders, entrepreneurs, activists, or in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field and 25 years old or younger from Cyprus, Florida, Africa, New York, New Hampshire, and Washington State.

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Merrill's global impact extends through her participation in UN Women's "Generation Equality Forum" and was selected for the inaugural YOUNGA™ Forum, connecting with top-level decision-makers and influencers in a global youth takeover of the United Nations to co-create solutions to global challenges. She is also a Young Professional with United Nations Association of the United States, a Youth Leader Participant for UN Women's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum, a UN Innovation Network Observer, and a member of the UN's Space Generation Advisory Council.

A catalyst for change, she has dedicated her life to making the world a better place for all. As a Voices for Innovation (VFI) Ambassador, she traveled to Washington, D.C. in support of public policies that advance innovation and foster a dynamic technology industry. She was the 2020 Women in Science Excel scholar, National Center for Women & Information Technology's "Aspirations in Computing" state winner, a NASA Space Grant Scholar who worked on insect robotics in space, has been featured as 1 Million Women In STEM, in Girl Museum, CreateHer Collective, selected as Geekwire's Geek of the Month for January 2021, and is a member of Society for Women Engineers.

One of approximately forty 10th-graders around the world to be accepted into UW Academy, created in partnership with the University of Washington Honors Program, Merrill left high school after her sophomore year and became a freshman in college at the age of 15. She is now a Mechanical Engineering major completing her final year, and relentless about paving a way for others. Keating is a black belt in Mixed Martial Arts, plays violin, piano, and alto saxophone, and speaks Mandarin.

Founded in 2000 as an ad-hoc group and recognized as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 2002, WSTA has evolved through the years but its mission has remained the same: to help foster a vibrant technology sector and innovation in the West Sound region. As a Technology Alliance associate, WSTA had spearheaded numerous local initiatives and has hosted hundreds of meetings to facilitate discussions about technology. WSTA's annual summits have featured many local and national leaders from the public and private sectors.

For more information about West Sound Technology Association and West Sound CoderDojo, visit www.westsoundtechnology.org.

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About WSTA

Founded in 2000, West Sound Technology Association is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to help foster a vibrant technology sector and innovation in the West Sound region. West Sound CoderDojo, a WSTA STEM initiative, is supported by local businesses and organizations, as well as mentors and other volunteers.

About West Sound CoderDojo

West Sound CoderDojo, a WSTA initiative that teaches community members of all ages how to program, is a chapter of CodeDojo International and one of only two U.S. licensed regional bodies. Sessions are free and hosted at Kitsap Regional Library's Silverdale branch. Since its inception in 2015, WSCD has inspired many youth and adults alike to pursue an interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

CONTACT:



/WestSoundTech



info@westsoundtechnology.org



www.westsoundtechnology.org



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**West Sound Technology Association
West Sound CoderDojo**