With environmental concerns at the forefront of many minds, it’s encouraging to know there are young people who want to leave a legacy for their communities.

Himani Kumar, an ambitious Farmington High Sophomore, explored her passion for the environment over the course of an intensive week this past July at UConn’s Natural Resources Conservation Academy’s (NRCA) Conservation Ambassador Program (CAP). Since October, she has been working on a Farmington waterways project based on her experience there and presented her findings at the CT Science Center’s “Youth in STEM: A Leadership & Changemaker Summit” on April 1.

Kumar’s week in July was spent at UConn’s dorms, giving her a taste of college living. Students worked with mentors, who are UConn’s environmental majors. Of the program, she said, “I found it necessary to make informed decisions regarding local land and water use and guide the conservation and protection of these important natural resources. Healthy waterways and fish populations are indicators of a healthy environment. A healthy environment is important for both human and wildlife populations as it provides essential ecosystem services such as food, habitat, flood control, erosion prevention, aesthetics, and regulating water quality.

Implications for Farmington and Beyond:
- Data and accounts from field observations and an initial health assessment are necessary to make informed decisions regarding local land and water use and guide the conservation and protection of these important natural resources.

Community Partnership
- Community involvement is key to the success of the project.

Conclusion and Next Steps
- Future Actions:
  - Implement and science regulations that limit the amount of pollution and development that can occur in or near waterways.
  - Promote the use of green infrastructure practices that can help reduce the amount of pollutants entering water bodies and improve water quality and habitat conditions for fish and other aquatic species.
  - Involve local stakeholders and assess the health and sustainability of local water bodies and the impacts of individual actions on water quality and conditions.
  - Encourage residents to adopt practices that protect and conserve these important resources.

Acknowledgements

Himani Kumar stands beside her poster containing all of her data from her 9-month project, “Flowing Forward: Evaluating Farmington’s Fish Populations for Informed Land and Water Use.” She presented this final culmination of her research at the CT Science Center’s “Youth in STEM: A Leadership & Changemaker Summit” on April 1. Courtesy Photos.

Summer project leaves a legacy
Farmington resident’s 9-month study of local waterways presented at CT Science Center

By Maria G. O’Donnell
Staff Writer

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Influenced by the son of family friends who recommended the program, Kumar applied last April with her interest in environmental conservation leading to a desire to educate her community with her waterways project.

According to the UConn NRCA website, CAP is a “9-month program for high school students (grades 9-11) interested in exploring the environment or making a difference in their community. The program includes a one-week field experience at UConn and a community environmental action project.”

Kumar’s week in July was spent at UConn’s dorms, giving her a taste of college living. Students worked with mentors, who are UConn’s environmental majors. Of the program,
she explained, "It was hands-on as to how the field would be." Students’ days were a full 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., requiring 100% participation in early day to late night environmental activities that focused on waterways, fisheries and forestry. "I fell in love with waterways and fisheries," said Kumar, who was inspired by her pet Comet goodspeed.org • 860.873.8668

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Talia Suskauer. Photo by Diane Sobolewski.

Recording data from fish collected, from left, Himani Kumar, Ashika Pradeep, Aakash Kumar, and Mike Beauchene.

CT DEEP’s Mike Beauchene holds pumpkinseed (top) and blue gill (bottom) fishes.
Today, we are being pressured to disregard the erosion of historic marriage and family principles and practice. ENCOURAGEMENT to be a normal, healthy family is noted by its absence in the media, government, etc. which presents even that which is contrary. Determination to try to rightly steer straight faces many and varied opponents. These opponents are determined to eliminate mother, father, husband, wife—anything and everything that opposes the pursuit of their agenda no matter the consequences. Even today’s social violence and unrest has at its root the absence of a father and mother. We are finding the wrong road signs and the wrong roads, calling wrong right and right wrong, calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). We face the ABSENCE of MORAL and MENTAL STANDARDS, to be caught up along with the crowd, trying to belong, to become, to find oneself, to find peace, to find love, to find worth, to find values which inspire and overcome a society that has abandoned such. There is little to no recovery of the normal and natural God-created family setting. The FAMILY needs the MOTHER; the NATION needs the FAMILY.

God’s Pattern is Set:
“HONOR thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee” (Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:2). “Whoever CURSES his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure [utter] darkness” (Prov. 20:20). “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and FORSAKE NOT the law of thy mother” (Prov. 1:8). “A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man DESPISETH his mother” (Prov. 15:20).

God’s Provision is Needed:
“This know also, that in the last days perilous [difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, unthankful, unholy” (2 Tim. 3:1-2). “There is a generation that CURSETH their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure IN THEIR OWN EYES” (Prov. 30:11-12). This is promoted by the age old “every man did that which was RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES” (Judges 21:25). And “let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die” (Isaiah 22:13). Take heart and know.

God’s Person is Found:
“I will LIFT UP MINE EYES unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. MY HELP COMETH FROM THE LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2). “And YE SHALL SEEK ME, AND FIND ME, when ye shall search for Me with ALL YOUR HEART, and I WILL BE FOUND BY you, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:13-14). “COME UNTO ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). The Nation, the Family and YOU need God and His sure and certain Word, the BIBLE.

The Lord Jesus Christ is waiting to provide you the right and real relationship that God’s RIGHTEOUSNESS requires and in which God’s LIFE is found. This makes for life that is worth the living. You can find God’s HELP and HOPE and ENCOURAGEMENT today. Why not begin RIGHT NOW and receive Him as your personal Saviour and Lord (John 1:10-13)? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31).

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Because the House needs to be a HOME
Because our Mother needs to be OUR MOTHER

Electrofishing in Unionville Brook, from left, Himani Kumar, Ashika Pradeep, Aakash Kumar, and Mike Beauchene. Photos by Maria G. O’Donnell
Scott Swamp Brook, and Unionville Brook because “those ones have the least amount of prior data.” It was last updated in 2012. Her project’s main objectives were three-fold: To collect accurate data on fish population counts, to analyze the data, and provide background information relevant to the community.

In November, with the help of DEEP’s Beauchene, Kumar “looked at cold water habitats to determine what types of fish I’m looking for – bass, sunfish – to determine the streams’ health. Mike gave guidance as to what to look for.” He also provided equipment for electrofishing, which Kumar explained as a method that sends electric currents in the water, stunning fish for 8-10 seconds, allowing time for her and friends helping her to net fish and transfer them to a bucket.

“I’m thankful to CAP; it’s a good example of a program that will impact the community... I hope [the project’s impact] will last a lifetime.”

- Himani Kumar, UConn NRCA CAP Student

Different characteristics of different species determines the health of the stream based on those numbers.

The April 1 CT Science Center presentation was titled “Youth in STEM: A Leadership & Changemaker Summit.” Kumar

Himani Kumar, at home with her pet Comet goldfish, her inspiration for her passion for waterways and fisheries.
attended, along with students who had participated in the CAP program with her, their UConn mentors, community partners, families, friends, and others interested in the program.

Regarding the Summit, she said, “It went phenomenally, and I enjoyed learning about everyone else’s project as well as presenting my own.”

Kumar’s presentation was titled, “Flowing Forward: Evaluating Farmington’s Fish Populations for Informed Land and Water Use.”

Kumar noted that her parents were “really supportive of the entire process.” Her mom, Priyanka, noted that the program “aligns with what she has as a passion.” She remembered her daughter helping the neighbors with gardening as a fourth grader. When Himani wanted to immerse herself in the 9-month program back in July, Priyanka recalled wondering how the freshman, at the time, would fare.

“Now I’m proud to see her presentation” at the Science Center, said Priyanka. “There was so much learning; I wish I had that exposure [at her age]. It was a good concept that brought awareness – half the things, I didn’t know. We all use the town water and [learned] how healthy it is for wildlife and us.”

The UConn NRCA CAP Program was “an overall great experience, and I’m very thankful to them for having provided it, and it gave me a good understanding of environmental science,” said Kumar. “I’m thankful to my community partner Mike and my UConn mentors. They helped me stay on top of things, and I couldn’t have done it without them. I’m thankful to CAP; it’s a good example of a program that will impact the community.”

One of her main goals was educating her community on “the actions on streams and rivers and how conservation of them is important – I hope [the project’s impact] will last a lifetime.”

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