

February 2021



KAITLYN

2020 AEOP Alumni Challenge Sustainability Challenge

I am a freshman attending Toms River High School North in NJ. Currently, I am interested in a career in the sciences and/or engineering.

WORDS OF ADVICE

I highly recommend getting involved in an AEOP program. You just never know what doors you'll open by participating.

BEST THINGS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The AEOP Alumni Challenge increased my awareness of the worldwide depleting honeybee population. The greatest single contributor to the decline of bee health is the Varroa destructor mite. I learned a single mite can shorten the lifespan of a bee by one-third, and two mites can shorten it by one-half. Currently, synthetic chemicals and other methods are used to control Varroa, but the mites are developing resistance. It is pivotal that honeybees get relief from Varroa. The AEOP Alumni Challenge inspired and motivated me to find a natural solution.

HOW PARTICIPATING IN AEOP INSPIRED YOU TO ADVANCE IN STEM

The AEOP Alumni Challenge also inspired me to become involved in beekeeping. I contacted and engaged local/state beekeepers, beekeeping associations, as well as faculty from Rutgers, Stockton and the University of Florida. I implemented an in-vitro/laboratory-based experiment of my Alumni Challenge proposal. During the spring, I will be working on my beekeeping certification. While COVID-19 has stalled some of my efforts; I am currently working with my local 4-H to set up a beekeeping club for my community. A pivotal part of my project will be public engagement, particularly introducing and connecting children and students to beekeeping.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE HOPES AND DREAMS?

I hope to be a scientist and conduct research. I would like to make a discovery that will have a positive impact on our society.