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Today@NPS



U.S. Navy photo by Javier Chagoya

Computer Science Student Earns Meaningful Grace Murray Hopper Award

By Javier Chagoya

NPS computer science (CS) student Lt. Leslie Ward, rear row, second from left, is this quarter's recipient of the Rear Adm. Grace Murray Hopper Computer Science Award. Ward and 17 of her fellow students were recognized for outstanding academic achievement during the Winter Quarter Awards ceremony held in Herrmann Hall's Quarterdeck, March 15.

"I'm very excited about this award, particularly because from age 8, I've always seen Admiral Grace Hopper as my hero," said Ward.

In many ways, Ward was destined to follow in Hopper's, and her parents' footsteps. Ward's mother was a computer programmer, and her father worked at computer manufacturing giant Texas Instruments in their hometown of Houston, Texas. Her first computer was a 1982 TI-99/4A, a home computer already older than Ward when she began tapping its keyboard.

"Growing up, Admiral Grace Murray Hopper was a household name for our family. Later, and maybe driven by Hopper's military service, I joined the Navy through its scholarship college program. I fulfilled a dream being able to graduate with a CS bachelor's degree from Texas A&M, thus earning my commission to serve as a Surface Warfare Officer. I've been in now for 12 years, and I think my parents will be proud of me as I journey on," said Ward.

Looking further down the road, Ward has aspirations to one day work at NASA's Johnson Space Center (JSC) Mission Control, located in her hometown. Growing up in southeast Texas, her connection with NASA goes way back.

"I probably have visited [JSC] 30 times. I love the idea of being a part of space

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exploration," Ward said. "I loved the space shuttle program – I think it's beautiful and powerful, and the fact that we managed to build a reusable space vehicle that worked for 30 years is amazing."

Following graduation, Ward reports to the Joint Information Operations Warfare Center in San Antonio, getting her closer to home than at any other time in her Navy career.

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