



Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation Inc.



Board of
Directors:

Ralph Bunday
President
Eileen Steinkraus
Vice-President
Ted Jou
Secretary
Dan Shepherdson
Treasurer
Nannette Dyas
Member
Emily Yanisko
Member
Sherrie Emoto
Member
Beth Kaufman
General Counsel

Address:

MBHS Magnet
Foundation Inc.
P.O. Box 5329
Takoma Park,
MD 20913

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 2009

CONTACT: Sherrie Emoto, board@mbhsmagnet.org

Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Alumnus Receives Prestigious MacArthur Award and Acknowledges Magnet

Silver Spring, MD—Maneesh Agrawala, Montgomery Blair High School Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program Class of 1990 graduate, was named as one of 24 MacArthur “genius” Fellows for 2009. The announcement was made by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation on September 22. As a fellow, Agrawala will receive \$100,000 per year for the next five years, no strings attached.

The award is intended to provide exceptionally bright minds the opportunity to think creatively without the usual burdens associated with research money. The recipients represent fields as diverse as photojournalism, mixed-media art, applied mathematics, and infectious diseases. Although it is an honor to be recognized by those in one’s own field, it is especially rewarding to be honored along with researchers in varied areas of study.

Agrawala, 37, is currently an Associate Professor in the Departments of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of California Berkeley. His research involves investigating how cognitive design principles can be used to improve the effectiveness of visual displays of all kinds and encompasses the fields of graphics, visualization, and human-computer interaction. At Stanford University as a graduate student, he developed a map-rendering system that generates a simple map highlighting the route to follow while de-emphasizing extraneous information.

Current and retired magnet computer science teachers, Lola Piper and Susan Ragan, respectively, remember their former student as a member of the first SuperQuest team of magnet students who spent seven weeks in the summer of 1988 learning how to solve science problems via a supercomputer and going on to develop the school’s internet node, mbhs.edu. Both Piper and Agrawala’s Magnet Class of 1990 classmate, Mark Shay, admit that this honor is a remarkable achievement for anyone but not surprising to those who know and remember Agrawala. In correspondence with Ragan and retired

Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation Inc.

magnet mathematics teacher, Nanette Dyas, Agrawala credits the magnet, stating, “The magnet program really set me on the path for working in visualization, graphics, and human-computer interaction.” He concludes, “I certainly wouldn’t be here without that experience.”

From Blair, Agrawala went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and a Ph.D. in computer science from Stanford University. He then enjoyed a three-year tenure at Microsoft Research before his current position at the University of California Berkeley. Awards earned by Agrawala include an Okawa Foundation Research Grant, an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellowship, an NSF CAREER Award, and a SIGGRAPH Significant New Researcher Award.

About The Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation

This organization was founded by a group of concerned students, teachers, administrators, and alumni in 2008. Its purpose is to promote science, mathematics, and computer science education by supporting the Magnet Program at Montgomery Blair High School in its efforts to develop resources and refine practices needed to provide a rigorous and enriched education for students, staff, and the community at large. The Foundation is incorporated in the state of Maryland and is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

###

