

## **GHCI 2017 - The Grace Hopper Celebration India 2017, November 16-17, 2017, Bangalore India**

The Grace Hopper Celebration of women in computing, India (co-sponsored by ACM) has become a flagship event in the Indian technology circles. Every winter, hordes of women technologists descend upon Bangalore to participate, learn and contribute to the conference that represents diversity and excellence at its core.



This year, with new leadership, a new venue and a new brand, GHCI brought together ~3700 women at their annual conference. The location of BIEC (being further away from the city) did not deter the ladies from showing up and partaking of the activities. As with every year, the tracks were unique and relevant and appealed to a wide variety of audiences. There were some familiar and known tracks like Career Mastery, Emerging Technologies, Human Computer Interaction and Systems Engineering and many new and exciting ones like AI, Data Mining & ML, Big Data, IoT and Cloud, and Techno Social Innovation. Each track was clearly defined and held enough unique appeal to showcase the myriad products and ideas that the women work on.

As always, Day 1 was kicked off by the ABI staff. Speaking to

a hall filled with 3700 hopeful and excited faces, Geetha Kannan, Managing Director of ABI India, brought forth her summary of the years gone by, her vision for the future all paired with the wry humour that she is famous for. Her big message included the importance of having a diverse team while building a robust product. She also had the important role of introducing the new CEO of [AnitaB.org](http://AnitaB.org), Brenda Darden Wilkerson. As she took on the mantle from the exiting CEO Telle Whitney, Brenda expressed her eagerness to continue to focus on India as a stronghold for [AnitaB.org](http://AnitaB.org)'s activities and a future that gave opportunities to many women across the world. ACM president Madhavan Mukund also spoke at the inauguration ceremony and brought out the collaboration opportunities that ACM and [AnitaB.org](http://AnitaB.org) have that can help reach the widest corners of the country, to bring knowledge and inspiration to young girls.



Pankaja Sridevi, MD of ANZ Bangalore Service Centre, took on the stage for the first keynote. Her speech was peppered with personal and relatable examples and a self deprecating humour that really appealed to the audience. Her focus on supporting your peers, being champions of change and empowering your ecosystem was well received as practical, actionable and useful advice. The CXO panel on "The Rise of the Machines" was also very relevant and eye opening. Moderated by Geetha Kannan, the panelists - Anu Acharya (MapMyGenome), Dilipkumar Khandelwal (SAP Labs India), Anant Maheshwari (Microsoft India) and San Banerjee (Apartment Adda) - really brought forth their views on how automation is taking over our world and how we could equip ourselves to be successful as women technologists in the new changing workplace.

During lunch, our ACM sponsored scholars met informally with the ACM-W leadership for a breakout session to share their experiences and learning. The ACM sponsored 40 participants which included students and faculty members. The following ACM-W India Council members participated in the breakout mentoring session - Dr. Arati M. Dixit(chair), Dr. Sheila Anand, Dr. Rituparna Chaki, Dr. Maushmi Barooah, Ms. Heena Thimani and Ms. Gungjan Lal. There were representatives from about 15 ACM student chapters from India. The atmosphere was full of

energy and enthusiasm as each chapter shared the activities they have been doing and planning. All the participants got excellent networking opportunities with other ACM student chapters.



Day 2 brought forth yet another valuable and engaging keynote from Rebecca Parsons, CTO of Thoughtworks. Rebecca's focus on continuous learning and practical advice on her own experience, relating it to programming and coding, made for a very fun and inspiring hour. She encouraged the women to take big risks with the sage advice of "Move towards something exciting, not just away from something uncomfortable". Her session was quickly followed by the Women's Entrepreneur Quest (WEQ). Always being the most energetic and fun part of the conference, this year was no different. Dr. Anita Gupta of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, introduced the audience to all the stellar work that the government was doing to encourage and retain women entrepreneurs - especially in science and technology streams. Their constant support of the WEQ through the years is a testament to their

commitment to women technologists. The WEQ winners represented a diverse set of accomplished women - working on ideas ranging from energy, healthcare, agriculture, virtual reality and social impact. Their learning and exposure from their silicon valley trip will help them bolster their entrepreneurial journey and serve as an inspiration for all the attendees of GHCI.

As always, GHCI left us all feeling rejuvenated and inspired. The technical sessions were of high quality and introduced us to many new areas such as aerospace sensors, 3-d Bioprinting, and maintaining your digital assets. We also got the opportunity to dive deeper in Neural Networks, Artful UX design and edge computing. We



heard from renowned leaders about honing your instincts to make better decisions, and bringing humility and conversational intelligence into our thoughts and actions.

GHCI continues to connect, inspire and guide women technologists in India and ACM's association with the conference reinforces our commitment to making the technology world a fair playing field for all genders.