

IJAS NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER
2025



Message

NEW OUTREACH PROGRAM

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

of the IJAS Student Board



Dear IJAS Sponsors and Regional Chairs,

With the 2025-2026 school year underway, I'd like to welcome everyone back to the Illinois Junior Academy of Science. Thank you for your continued dedication to helping students explore research and discovery. Your support as regional chairs, sponsors, and volunteers inspire the next generation of scholars and leaders. Our quarterly mailings will now be monthly newsletters designed by the student board covering important information related to the IJAS State Exposition & Regional Fairs. I've detailed some of the most important dates below, and additional info can be found later in this mailing. As always, the most up-to-date information can be found on the [IJAS Website](https://www.ijas.org).

Regional Fairs

Regional fairs are held in late February and throughout March. Dates will be posted on the [IJAS Website](https://www.ijas.org) as they are finalized. Registration for ALL Regional Fairs will be open on January 1, 2026 and will be due by February 15, 2026.

State Exposition

The 2026 IJAS State Exposition will be held on April 24-25, 2026, at Southern Illinois University (SIU) in Carbondale. While the schedule is not finalized, I can share that we will be following the framework from last year, with poster session judging occurring Friday & Saturday, and Paper Session occurring on Saturday. Back by popular demand – the “SIU Pizza Party” will return Friday following the poster session, as well as “Afternoon at the Rec” on Saturday at 12 Noon. Tickets to these events (and others) will be available on the IJAS website in January.

Membership

Registration is now open on the IJAS website, and the deadline to register is December 31, 2025. Late fees will apply beginning January 1, 2026. If your school was a member last year, an invoice will be sent for this year's membership dues. Membership is required to compete in any regional, state, or national competition associated with IJAS.

Thank you for your continued support of IJAS and your commitment to your students. We're looking forward to SIU! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@ijas.org.

Sincerely,
Emily Dawson, President



IJAS Mission

The Illinois Junior Academy of Science exists for the benefit of students in the State of Illinois. The process students follow for IJAS gives them some insight into the problems and methods of thinking that are particular to the scientist. This process encourages these students to find information concerning new investigations and discoveries in science.

It allows students a chance to use and gain an understanding of scientific equipment. Science fair gives reason for students with a special interest in science to go beyond the classroom curriculum and develop their own investigation(s). IJAS encourages students in their progress toward a career in science, technology, and engineering.

Meet the President of the IJAS Student Board

Dear IJAS Student Participants,

My name is Agrini Neekhra, and I am incredibly excited to serve as your IJAS Student Board President for the 2025-2026 year. On behalf of the student board, I want to welcome both new and returning students to another unforgettable year of scientific discovery. I hope you are ready to question the world, take action, and inspire others!

If you haven't checked out the IJAS website, please do; it is constantly being updated. We are working on additional upgrades and strive to enhance the user experience. You can find how-to videos on each step of the science fair process, newsletters (like the one you're reading now!), links to the office hours where student board members will answer any of your questions, and more.

Since science is all about thinking outside the box, it also encompasses writing and art. IJAS and the student board sponsors not only the State Science Exposition but also hosts the annual Essay, Design, and Decal contests. This year's theme is "Driven by Discovery: Research is Key".

As we begin our projects, I implore you to reach out within your communities and showcase the endless possibilities that come from scientific research. I encourage you to not only showcase your work in the IJAS Regional and State competitions, but to branch out and enter into other regional, state, and national competitions. IJAS hosts affiliated fairs for both the ISEF (International Science & Engineering Fair) and the JIC (ThermoFisher Junior Innovators Challenge). Our parent organization, the Illinois State Academy of Science (ISAS), hosts an Annual Meeting where undergraduate and graduate researchers present their work, and where you can do the same. Stay tuned to our website and social media channels for more information, due dates, and many other competition announcements.

I am excited to see all of you at the 99th IJAS State Exposition at SIU - Carbondale in April. As you progress through your STEM journey this year, please share your progress on socials by tagging IJAS.

If you encounter any obstacles, feel free to contact us or pop into an office hours session. As always, remember to be curious and be bold!

Agrini Neekhra
Dunlap High School

SAVE THE DATE

2026 IJAS

State Science Exposition

April 24-25, 2026



Southern Illinois University
CARBONDALE



Agrawal, G. (2024, July 15). London

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How to Become
a Donor

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New Outreach Committee

By Caleb Gao

With Issa Geisendorfer

To achieve its mission of fostering scientific inquiry and discovery throughout the state of Illinois, IJAS has launched a new Outreach Committee this year. Issa Geisendorfer, a senior from Region 10, is entrusted with the role of Chairperson of the new Outreach Committee. The IJAS newsletter team had the opportunity to interview him to ask him about his goal as well as his plan for the Outreach Committee.

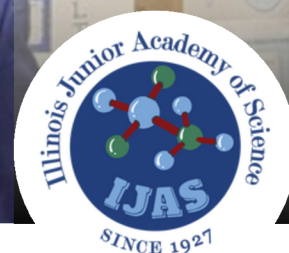
Working with twelve students from each of the regions on the Outreach Committee, Issa hopes to encourage as many Illinois students to be on the path of scientific exploration as possible. He and his team plan to reach out to different schools and communities, especially those underrepresented. “The outreach committee connects underrepresented students who wish to pursue a field of science, or who are simply interested in science, and our purpose is to make IJAS as inclusive, accessible, and overall empowering for aspiring scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs,” said Issa.

Podarolla, A. (2025, May 2). [Photograph].

Participating in the IJAS exposition in his sophomore year, Issa feels he has missed out and wishes he joined IJAS sooner. Yet, this feeling of missing out makes him understand how an outreach effort is crucial to help students who are hesitant to join or are unsure of how to conduct research. These students may be from schools where there are no science clubs or students who are homeschooled and lack opportunities to do scientific experiments.

As for his plan as the Chair of the Outreach Committee, Issa aims to regularly brainstorm for ideas with his team during committee meetings. For now, one of the potential projects is to host exhibitions at different schools to showcase the works of IJAS students with the hope that those works will inspire students to participate in the IJAS State Exposition. Another plan is to utilize social media by asking IJAS student participants to repost IJAS news on their social media platforms. Lastly, Issa plans to rely on words of mouth by eliciting the help of IJAS student participants to talk to anyone they know about IJAS. “It would definitely be helpful to kind of just spread information about what IJAS is and to reach more people,” said Issa.

With the help of everyone and the relentless effort of the Outreach Committee, Issa has high hopes of seeing more students from the underrepresented groups at the IJAS State Exposition. He also encourages students who have ideas or questions about the outreach program to email him or other committee members.





Upcoming Events

September

September IJAS Board Meeting

September 14, 2025 - 7 pm

September Sponsor & Participant Webinar

September 18, 2025 - 4 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85320809209?pwd=cqrbyY4Frys5XB3IHwn3wNjN1YcxNu.1>

Meeting ID: 853 2080 9209 - Passcode: 814906

October

October IJAS Office Hours

October 12, 2025 - 6 pm

October IJAS Student Board Meeting

October 12, 2025 - 7 pm

Intro to IJAS Webinar

October 21, 2025 - 4 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84077035460?pwd=R8yVL1lutEpY8tebebejaBaXezNTK4.1>

Meeting ID: 840 7703 5460 - Passcode: 134020

October IJAS Adult Board Meeting

October 25, 2025 - 9 am

October Sponsor & Participant Webinar

September 18, 2025 - 4 pm

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85320809209?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85320809209?pwd=cqrbyY4Frys5XB3IHwn3wNjN1YcxNu.1)

[pwd=cqrbyY4Frys5XB3IHwn3wNjN1YcxNu.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85320809209?pwd=cqrbyY4Frys5XB3IHwn3wNjN1YcxNu.1)

Meeting ID: 853 2080 9209 - Passcode: 814906

**IJAS
Office
Hours**

October 12th
6pm

November 9th
6 pm

December 14th 6
pm

January 11th
6 pm

CONTACT LIST

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IJAS President-Elect

Brian Lewandowski

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SAVE THE DATES

2026 IJAS

State Science Exposition

April 24-25



**Southern
Illinois
University**
CARBONDALE

IJAS Project and Paper

Registration by: February 15th

No late entries will be accepted.

IJAS is excited to announce that Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois will be hosting the IJAS 2026 State Science Exposition from April 24th to April 25th, 2026. The exposition will be for those who qualify for state. To qualify for state you must get recommended in your regional competition. IJAS is excited to welcome another generation of new scientists to compete and learn from the exposition. We wish everyone who competes good luck!

2026 Regional Fairs

<https://ijas.org/Regional-Science-Expositions>

Region 1

March 14

Western Illinois University

Region 2

March 7 (*paper*)

March 14 (*poster*)

Region 3

March 13th (*paper*)

March 14th (*poster*)

Region 4 - TBD

Region 5 - TBD

Region 6 - TBD

Region 7

March 30

Ramsey Junior High

Region 8

TBD

Southern Illinois University

Region 9

March 7th (*paper*)

March 14th (*poster*)

Region 10

March 14

Lincoln Land Community College

Region 11

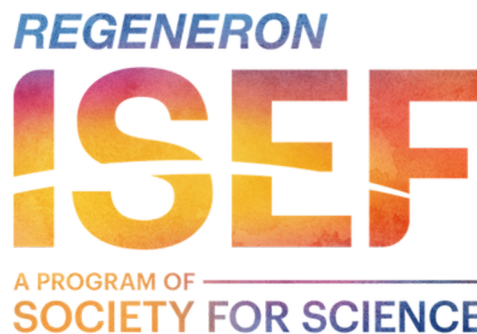
March 7

Region 12

March 21

Southwestern Illinois College

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ISEF



In May, IJAS participants competed in the 75th Annual Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), taking place in Columbus, Ohio. Here are some of the IJAS students who competed in Regeneron ISEF 2025. Competitors won prizes ranging from scholarships to more than a thousand dollars, all the while representing Illinois at an international level.

Amritha Praveen

Category: Translational Medical Sciences

IJAS Student Board Vice President

Project focused on finding a way to give radiation therapy on a case-by-case basis.

Won 3rd place Grand Award

Arnav Chaphalakar

Category: Systems Software

IJAS Student Board Member

Project focused on utilizing computer programs to be able to tell split section scores in fencing

Won 3rd place Grand Award

Agrini Neekhra

Category: Translational Medical Science

IJAS Student Board President

Project focused on identifying and reducing antibiotic treatment delay in pediatric febrile neutropenia

Won Long Island Presidential Scholarship

Ashra Roshy

Category: Cellular and Molecular Biology

Past IJAS competitor

Project focused on determining how protein functions affect different types of cells

Won the New American scholarship to ASU

These brilliant students, representing Illinois and IJAS at ISEF, exhibited their exceptional research skills at an international competition. Their innovative works are representative of the quality of IJAS students. We hope to see many more brilliant IJAS students compete in ISEF.