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**UC San Diego** (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/>)  
**SALLY RIDE SCIENCE**

## Sally Ride Science cofounder Tam O'Shaughnessy receives humanitarian award for STEM education advocacy



(<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Gala-Cropped-2.jpg>)

October 24, 2017 (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/sally-ride-science-cofounder-tam-oshaghnessy-receives-humanitarian-award-for-stem-education-advocacy/>) by Sally Ride Science

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Tam O'Shaughnessy, cofounder and executive director of Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego (<http://www.sallyridescience.com>), has been honored with the 2017 Joe Shapiro Humanitarian Award for her advocacy of science literacy and diversity in science education.

O'Shaughnessy received the award October 21 at Cal State Los Angeles' Billie Jean King & Friends Gala (<http://www.calstatela.edu/bjk20>) in recognition of her work to inspire girls and boys of all backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Also during the gala, Dolores Huerta, labor leader and civil rights activist, received the Cal State LA Presidential Medallion.

In accepting the humanitarian award, O'Shaughnessy reflected on the need for diverse role models so students can envision themselves in STEM fields. "We need to prepare our students for their future careers," she said. "Sadly, the workforce does not reflect who we are as a people. We have a lot of work left to do."

O'Shaughnessy and her life partner, Sally Ride, America's first woman in space, joined with three friends in 2001 to found Sally Ride Science. As the San Diego-based company's chief creative officer, O'Shaughnessy oversaw innovative programs and publications that reached millions of students. Sally Ride Science became part of UC San Diego in 2015, with O'Shaughnessy as executive director.

In her acceptance speech, O'Shaughnessy talked about the debt she owes to her mother and to tennis legend Billie Jean King, who served as her coach and mentor when O'Shaughnessy was a young tennis player.

"Billie Jean gave me a great gift," O'Shaughnessy said. "She saw things in me that I didn't yet see in myself. She helped me to believe in myself."

The annual Billie Jean King & Friends Gala raises money to fund scholarships for student-athletes at Cal State LA. King, famed as both a tennis champion and a social justice advocate, attended Cal State LA and won her first Wimbledon title while she was on the school's tennis team. As in past years, the gala was held at the Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena.



Labor leader Dolores Huerta (left) and Sally Ride Science cofounder Tam O'Shaughnessy were honored at the gala. (Terry McEntee photos)

The Joe Shapiro Humanitarian award recognizes a person whose work and community service have had a positive and lasting impact. The award is given in memory of Shapiro, a former executive vice president at Walt Disney Co. who taught at Cal State LA. Shapiro, husband of tennis champion Pam Shriver, died in 1999. Shriver served as master of ceremonies at the gala.

Past recipients of the humanitarian award have included Ride; former California First Lady Maria Shriver; tennis great Chris Evert; Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersey; sportswriter Frank Deford; and physicist and philanthropist Frances Hellman.

Joining King, Shriver, and the honorees on the dais at the gala was tennis hall of fame Rosie Casals. She shared the broadcast booth with Howard Cosell during King's historic match with Bobby Riggs in 1973, the subject of the new film *The Battle of the Sexes*. Guests watched a clip from the movie during the gala.

## **From tennis to science**

O'Shaughnessy grew up in Southern California and played professional tennis from 1971 to 1974. As a teenager, she was coached by King, who remained her friend through the years.

O'Shaughnessy received B.S. and M.S. degrees in biology from Georgia State University. While teaching high school biology, she became interested in how children learn. She earned her PhD in school psychology from the UC Riverside and became a professor in that field at San Diego State University.

As a scientist and educator, O'Shaughnessy grew increasingly concerned about the low level of science literacy among young people, and the underrepresentation of women in science and technical professions. Her concerns led her to join in founding Sally Ride Science. In addition to chief creative officer, she served as the company's chief operating officer, and after Ride's death in 2012, as chair of the Board of Directors and later chief executive officer.

When Sally Ride Science joined UC San Diego in 2015, the company became a nonprofit entity. Its innovative STEM programs are coordinated by UC San Diego Extension, Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the San Diego Supercomputer Center.

O'Shaughnessy has written 13 children's books, including six with Ride. The two won the American Institute of Physics Children's Science Writing Award in 1995 for *The Third Planet*. In 2015 O'Shaughnessy published *Sally Ride: A Photobiography of America's Pioneering Woman in Space*. It was nominated for the Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature.

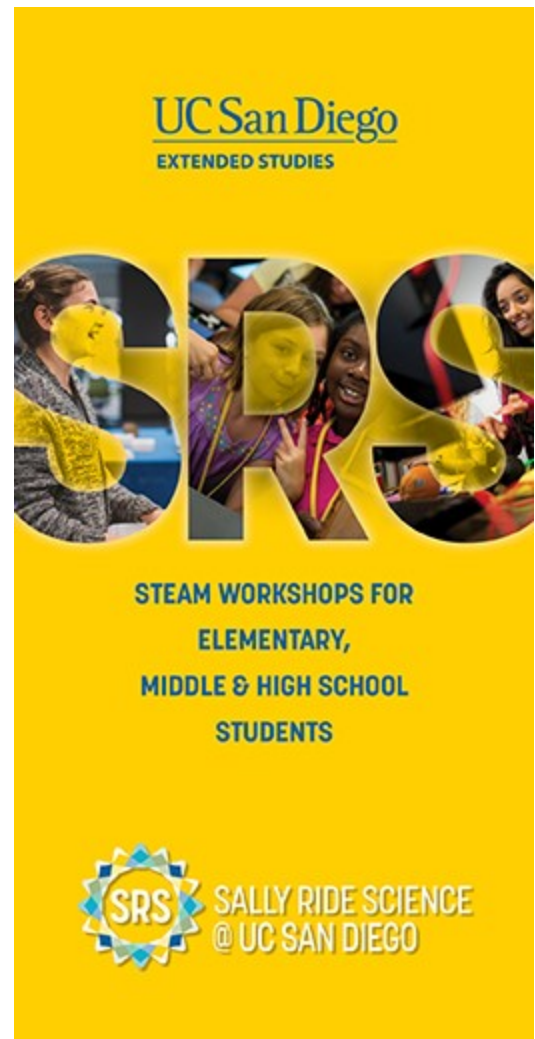
O'Shaughnessy also serves on the Cal State Los Angeles President's Council and the Advisory Board of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.

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