

Girl Scouts Works with SETI Institute to Skyrocket Girls' Interest in STEM

The organizations will celebrate Reaching for the Stars: NASA Science for Girl Scouts on August 21 with total solar eclipse viewing events.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dallas, TX—Today, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas and Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) announced new details about a five-year program called Reaching for the Stars: NASA Science for Girl Scouts. Funded by NASA's Science Mission Directorate and led by SETI Institute, the program offers more girls opportunities to explore careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through new Space Science badges.

Research shows women are still vastly underrepresented in STEM fields and exposing girls to these subjects at a young age is vital to ignite their curiosity and close this gap. In response, together with five partners—SETI Institute, Girl Scouts of Northern California, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the University of Arizona, and ARIES Scientific—GSUSA and Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas are equipping girls as young as five years old with the confidence and skills they need to take their STEM interest to the next level.

At the center of the collaboration are new Space Science badges for girls at every Girl Scout grade level. These badges, combined with GSUSA's larger suite of national STEM programming, provide a seamless pathway for girls to develop a lifetime love of the cosmos and its endless possibilities. The badges range from Space Science Explorer, which introduces Daisies in kindergarten and first grade to the fundamentals of space science, to Space Science Master, which engages Ambassadors in grades 11–12 in their own explorations of space based on research that NASA scientists are conducting. Other badges include Space Science Adventurer (for Brownies), Space Science Investigator (for Juniors), Space Science Researcher (for Cadettes), and Space Science Expert (for Seniors).

By 2019, the Space Science badges will join GSUSA's already robust roster of STEM badges for girls, and all badge content and activities will be delivered to volunteers through the organization's national online Volunteer Toolkit. This "digital assistant" for troop leaders, volunteers, and parents not only makes it easier than ever to plan meetings and activities but also makes STEM programming more accessible and understandable for volunteers, reducing the intimidation some feel when guiding girls' STEM experiences.

"We are incredibly grateful for SETI Institute's partnership and the funding from NASA's Science Mission Directorate to make space-science learning even more accessible to girls," said GSUSA CEO Sylvia Acevedo. "My experience as a Girl Scout prompted my love of all things STEM, and served as the foundation for my future career as a rocket scientist. It also empowered me with the leadership skills and confidence to excel within a male-dominated field.

Now, through this collaboration, even more girls will have the opportunity to explore the exciting realm of space science, in the supportive and holistic environment that Girl Scouts provides.”

Launch of new Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Astronomy Club

The Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas STEM Center of Excellence in Dallas will now be home to one of 11 Girl Scout Astronomy Clubs across the nation. This summer, a team comprised of two Girl Scouts, a troop leader and a member of the Night Sky Network were selected to attend an astronomy training at the NASA Goddard Space Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. Participants were trained on a variety of space science activities for youth and best practices for establishing a youth astronomy club. Through this partnership, NASA Goddard’s Space Center equipped these teams on how to form and facilitate local astronomy clubs, and also provided a \$1,000 grant in addition to an 8” Dobsonian Telescope which will be used atop The Moody Foundation Observation Tower at the STEM Center of Excellence

The Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas will launch the local club, open to girls middle school through high school, in late September in partnership with the Texas Astronomical Society and UT Arlington. More information about the GSNETX STEM Center of Excellence Astronomy Club can be found at www.gsnetx.org/astronomy.

“It is truly an incredible time to be a Girl Scout,” said Jennifer Bartkowski, chief executive officer of Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas. “The NASA partnership and formation of our STEM Center astronomy club are prime examples of relevant, exciting and hands-on 21st century programs that will help girls experience an array of STEM activities now, and vision possibilities for their future.”

Solar Eclipse Day Events

Additionally, thanks to NASA’s funding, this summer Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas along with 90 Girl Scout councils across the United States received kits filled with materials that allow girls to explore space science and eclipse-related activities, leading up to the August 21, 2017 Total Solar Eclipse. The kits include instructions for educational activities, such as using smartphones or digital cameras to “see” infrared light, using the sun to tell time, and building a solar oven.

Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas will host two solar eclipse family events at the STEM Center of Excellence in Dallas – August 19, 2017 from 10 a.m. to noon and on Solar Eclipse Day - Monday, August 21, 2017 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. During the events, girls and family members will participate in hands-on activity stations including Texas pinhole projectors, eclipse phases, yardstick eclipse (learning how an eclipse works), solar s’mores, eclipse chalk art and ultraviolet light detectors. Girl Scouts will have a chance to work on a portion of one of the new citizen scientist awards just announced. Using the NASA GLOBE Observer app, girls will contribute to this citizen science project by taking and submitting air temperature readings. In addition, Dr. John Harkins, retired principal systems engineer at the International Space Station and current career coach, will talk with girls about STEM careers, and Prevent Blindness Texas will share tips on solar viewing safety and provide free vision screenings. For more information about these events, visit gsnetx.org/events. Science lovers can purchase eclipse-viewing glasses, a complete guide to the Total Solar Eclipse, and more from the Girl Scout Shop, as well as in any Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas store.

According to the Girl Scout Research Institute study [Generation STEM: What Girls Say about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math](#) (2012), though a majority of girls find STEM fields interesting (including 74 percent of teen girls), gender barriers persist: only 13 percent of girls say their first career choice would be in STEM, and 57 percent say that if they went into a STEM career, they'd have to work harder than a man to be taken seriously. In addition, extracurricular engagement in STEM among girls remains low. Only a third (36 percent) of girls who identify as having an interest in STEM report having participated in STEM activities outside school.

Girl Scouts has long been committed to challenging stereotypes and providing girls of all ages with interactive and engaging programs that increase their interest in STEM. In fact, the Girl Scout Research Institute's [The Girl Scout Impact Study](#) (2017) found that Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to participate in STEM activities, such as conducting science experiments, designing video games, and building robots (60 percent versus 35 percent). And Girl Scouts goes beyond offering STEM content by also providing a supportive all-girl environment that fosters social, emotional, and leadership development, the ingredients girls need to develop the confidence to persevere and succeed.

"Girl Scouts, SETI Institute, and NASA have a rich heritage of working together to give girls more opportunities to learn about space science, and we are excited to advance the cause," said SETI Institute Director of Education Edna DeVore. "With the resilience, ingenuity, and courage Girl Scouts instills in girls, it's no surprise that many female astronauts in the United States are Girl Scout alumnae. We recognize today's girls are tomorrow's STEM leaders, and with the new badges and programming, Girl Scouts everywhere will have access to even more of these opportunities, building the next generation of women leaders in STEM that we so desperately need."

Along with the new badges and total solar eclipse events, GSUSA's collaboration with NASA and SETI Institute supports leadership training in astronomy for Girl Scouts at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and the University of Arizona.

To join or volunteer, visit www.gsnetx.org/join.

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We're Girl Scouts of the USA

We're 2.6 million strong—1.8 million girls and 800,000 adults who believe in the power of every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)[™] to change the world. Our extraordinary journey began more than 100 years ago with the original G.I.R.L., Juliette Gordon "Daisy" Low. On March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia, she organized the very first Girl Scout troop, and every year since, we've honored her vision and legacy, building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. We're the preeminent leadership development organization for girls. And with programs from coast to coast and across the globe, Girl Scouts offers every girl a chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success. To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit www.girlscouts.org.

About Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas

Girl Scouts is the premier leadership development organization for girls. Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place. Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas serves more than 26,000 girls and 12,500 adults in 32 northeast Texas counties. Girl

Scouts of Northeast Texas is a 2017 Tech Titans Technology Advocate finalist and recently received the Center for Nonprofit Management nonprofit of the year award in 2016. The board is chaired by Kit Addleman, partner at Haynes and Boone, who was recognized by both the *Dallas Business Journal* and Center for Nonprofit Management nonprofit board chair of the year awards in 2016. For information on how to join, volunteer, donate or reconnect to the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, call (972) 349-2400 or visit www.gsnetx.org.

About SETI Institute

The mission of the Institute is to explore, understand, and explain the origin and nature of life in the universe, and to apply the knowledge gained to inspire and guide present and future generations. They have a passion for discovery, and for sharing knowledge as scientific ambassadors to the public, the press, and the government.

The SETI Institute is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to scientific research, education, and public outreach. [Founded in November 1984](#), the SETI Institute began operations on February 1, 1985. Today it employs over 130 scientists, educators, and support staff. Research at the Institute is anchored by three Centers: the [Carl Sagan Center for the Study of Life in the Universe](#), the [Center for Education](#), and the Center for Public Outreach. To connect with the Institute, visit www.seti.org.

About NASA

NASA leads the Nation on a great journey of discovery, seeking new knowledge and understanding of our Sun, Earth, solar system, and the universe. The NASA Science Mission Directorate (SMD) searches for answers across three overarching themes: Safeguarding and improving life on Earth, searching for life elsewhere, and discovering the secrets of the Universe. SMD's STEM Science Activation program advances STEM to improve U.S. scientific literacy through the leveraging of partners such as GSUSA and SETI.

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