

# Air Products Foundation Supports Da Vinci Science Center Student STEM Programs



By Caroline Scutt

ALLENTOWN – The Da Vinci Science Center is pleased to announce a grant award of \$20,000 from the Air Products Foundation in support of two programs created to engage students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

The Women in Science and Engineering or WISE Initiative and the Science Inquiry Fund both represent the Da Vinci Science Center's commitment to connecting marginalized students to greater opportunities for STEM education and awareness of potential careers in STEM fields.

A recent study revealed that despite women holding 49% of all jobs in the Lehigh Valley region, they represent only 29% of the STEM workforce and have the lowest representation in engineering and computer and mathematical sciences, where much of the STEM job growth is occurring. The Women in Science and Engineering or WISE Initiative was established to create a supportive networking environment and an ecosystem for women in STEM including career and mentorship programs for girls to learn about STEM careers and meet women who work in those fields. Ensuring that girls from underrepresented and underserved communities have access to these programs is a priority for the science center.

In the words of one excited middle schooler, "When I see other women scientists it makes me feel happy, excited and it's fun."

The second student opportunity supported by this grant is the Science Inquiry Fund, which provides a scholarship to low income students so that they are able to have access to STEM learning opportunities such as field trips, camps, science

clubs and shows. The fund targets area schools where over 40% of students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. In addition, the FUND supports Teacher Professional Development in STEM, providing them with training and tools to help improve the academic performance of underserved students and raise their awareness of the increasing array of STEM careers they could pursue.

"This grant is an investment in the work the Da Vinci Science center does around STEM education and outreach to ensure that underrepresented students have access to outstanding learning and networking experiences that could potentially lead to careers in STEM fields," explained Laurie Hackett Community Relations. "This work is strongly aligned with the Air Products Foundation's mission to support organizations that are focused on building stronger, more equitable communities, and that starts with engaging our young people."

"The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the need for these programs because low income students face greater barriers to rich science experiences, explained Lin Erickson, Executive Director and CEO of Da Vinci Science Center. "Our team met the challenges created by the pandemic by developing virtual programs that continue to engage, educate and connect our students, teachers and female professionals in STEM. We appreciate the Air Products Foundation's support of these programs at a time when the importance of STEM is underscored more than ever."

More than 2,000 underserved students will continue to have access to these programs thanks to the Air Products Foundation's commitment to STEM education and ensuring access for all students



## Slate Belt Y

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Certification from DHS was recently completed so registration is now open for toddlers and preschoolers. Child care is offered Monday through Friday from 6AM to 6PM. In addition to expansion at its Slate Belt location, the Y is reopening Preschool offerings at its Suburban North location located at 880 Walnut Street in Catasauqua.

The Y has a history in the region dating back to 1897. The Y has provided care and programming for children in the Lehigh Valley through its accredited program for decades. Prior to the pandemic, the Y served 1,100 children daily through child care and school age programming. The Y offers 25 licensed child care programs in PA and NJ. David Fagerstrom, President & CEO of the Greater Valley YMCA, expressed, "Our team is thrilled to expand our child care offerings for Lehigh Valley families. We love partnering with parents and guardians to provide children with a bright start.

The Y has a rich history of helping children learn, grow, and thrive. We are proud to help so many children reach their potential." Amid a season of increased challenges for all with the pandemic, once child care centers were permitted to reopen on June 8, 2020, the Y team adapted and adjusted standards to continue to provide families with a safe environment for their children to be cared for, enriched and engaged. At each of its locations, the Y strives to provide quality early childhood education in a caring, safe, positive, structured environment emphasizing on the building blocks needed to promote healthy child

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development. The Y embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant, toddler, preschooler, kindergarten, school age child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. Supported by an understanding of children's learning styles, interests, and PA Early Learning Standards, the Y's Preschool curriculum is designed to provide activities that enhance cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. This contributes

to a child's success in school and throughout life. The curriculum follows Creative Curriculum and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) supporting growth and development of youth in seven key learning areas: Literacy, Science, Math/Problem Solving, Arts, Social Competence, Fitness/Nutrition, and Technology.

This curriculum supports a unique learning environment that stimulates a child's curiosity while reinforcing essential academic standards. Financial Assistance for preschool is available for those who qualify. To learn more about the Y's child care offerings, schedule a tour of the facility or register, visit [gv-ymca.org/child-care](http://gv-ymca.org/child-care) or email [cmesser@gv-ymca.org](mailto:cmesser@gv-ymca.org). #### About the Greater Valley YMCA The Greater Valley YMCA is a volunteer-led, nonprofit, community organization. The Y is committed to strengthening community by positively changing lives every day. At each of our Branches, we concentrate our efforts in three areas:

