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**Arizona Science Center Receives \$100,000 Grant from Thunderbirds Charities to Support STEM in Metro Phoenix Schools**

*Engaging teachers, students and families in full day, hands-on science, technology, engineering and math programming*

**PHOENIX, Ariz. (March 6, 2017)** –Arizona Science Center is on a mission to bring an increased focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics – the subjects commonly referred to as STEM – to teachers, students and families across Arizona through its innovative, signature STEM Extravaganza program. Thunderbirds Charities awarded Arizona Science Center \$100,000 in grant funding to help provide customized learning to 3,500 students and 400 teachers from Metro Phoenix schools through the delivery of STEM Extravaganza programs at eight K–5 schools in 2017. The first program kicked off March 6, 2017 at Acacia Elementary School. Including this gift, Thunderbirds Charities has provided close to \$475,000 in grant support to Arizona Science Center projects and programs since 1994.

Piloted by Arizona Science Center in March of 2016, STEM Extravaganza is an educational program facilitated by the Center's education staff. The goal of STEM Extravaganza is to boost teacher's confidence and competence in STEM to ultimately improve student's learning experience sparking interest for STEM related skills and careers. The program serves teachers and students during a full-day of STEM activities for the students and professional development for teachers. Each STEM Extravaganza is customizable to meet the needs of each school.

Students learning themes include: anatomy, astronomy, coding, ecology and conservation, physics, engineering, bioscience and medicine to name a few. Educator Professional Development includes STEM Implementation in the classroom, Engineering is Elementary curriculum series, Project Based STEM Learning, Maker Mindset and customized training to meet individual needs. Additionally, parents participate by helping lead student group activities at each school.

“Thunderbirds Charities has donated over \$110 million over the years to Arizona organizations. This program firmly aligns with the Charities' education pillar, responding directly to the real-time needs of students, teachers and families for robust STEM learning,” said Dan Mahoney, President of Thunderbirds Charities. “Arizona Science Center staff are masterful at bringing STEM to life through hands-on interactive activities, and this program brings Science Center resources to members of our community who otherwise wouldn't have such an opportunity.”

"This model is brilliant," says Christine Hollingsworth, principal of Acacia Elementary in the Washington Elementary School District, who implemented a STEM Extravaganza at her school today. "Previously, teacher professional development, providing students with exciting and relevant hands-on science content, and engaging families in this process would happen with separate programs. Each taking sufficient time and resources to plan and execute. With a STEM Extravaganza, we are utilizing the expertise of Arizona Science Center to provide our students and families with engaging, hands-on science content while our teachers have a chance to be inspired and supported with their own type of learning. The more hands-on, visual learning we can do, the better," she said.

Research shows there is a need for high-quality professional development, especially in Arizona. Teachers find it difficult to integrate informal, hands-on STEM activities that excite students while teaching grade level standards.

Teacher and administrator feedback has been overwhelmingly positive since launching the STEM Extravaganza program. "This program is unique because it enables us to bring a focus on STEM education to teachers and students who would otherwise not have access to such training and resources," said Dr. Andi Furlis, Arizona Science Center Chief Learning Officer. "The Thunderbirds Charities grant will help us continue to grow this program that opens the eyes and minds of so many students in Arizona to the possibilities of STEM and encourages the continued support of their teachers."

### **About Arizona Science Center**

The mission of Arizona Science Center is to inspire, educate and engage curious minds through science. The Center, located at 600 E. Washington Street in downtown Phoenix, features more than 300 hands-on exhibits, live demonstrations, the state-of-the-art Dorrance Planetarium and the five-story Irene P. Flinn Giant Screen Theater. CREATE at Arizona Science Center®, adjacent to the main building, is the newest addition. This 6,500 square foot community makerspace provides workshops, including 3D printing, laser cutting, woodworking and sewing. The Center also offers programs for all ages, including: Camp Innovation, Teen Science Scene, Professional Development and Learning for Educators, and adults-only Science With A Twist. For further details, please visit [azscience.org](http://azscience.org).

### **About The Thunderbirds/Thunderbirds Charities**

Thunderbirds Charities is a non-profit organization formed in 1986 to distribute monies raised through the Waste Management Phoenix Open golf tournament. The Thunderbirds Charities Board consists of 15 board members from varying professional backgrounds. The mission of Thunderbirds Charities is to assist children and families,



help people in need and improve the quality of life in our communities. The organization's giving is directed toward organizations based or with a significant presence in Arizona. The Thunderbirds were founded in 1937 with the mission of promoting the Valley of the Sun through sports. The Thunderbirds consist of 55 "active" members and more than 250 "life" members. For more information on the Thunderbirds or the 2018 Waste Management Phoenix Open, visit [www.wmphoenixopen.com](http://www.wmphoenixopen.com). For more information on Thunderbirds Charities, visit [www.thunderbirdscharities.org](http://www.thunderbirdscharities.org).

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