



## **Arizona Science Center Receives \$385,000 Grant from APS Foundation to Bring STEM Subjects to Life in Rural Arizona Schools**

*Teachers at West Sedona School to Receive STEM Training for Third Year*

PHOENIX, Ariz. (August 26, 2016) –Arizona Science Center is on a mission to bring an increased focus on STEM subjects to rural Arizona schools through its Rural Communities Expansion Project. In July, the APS Foundation awarded Arizona Science Center a \$385,000 grant to continue the program for a third year in Cottonwood, Oak Creek, Humboldt, Winslow, Prescott, Sedona, Buckeye, Florence and to expand into Yuma schools. Since its inception, the APS Foundation has granted over \$1.2 million to this program.

The Rural Communities Expansion Project was first launched by Arizona Science Center in 2012 with the goal of increasing teacher confidence and competence in using hands-on, inquiry-based STEM instruction in their classroom, ensuring the same opportunities for success for all students, regardless of geography. The project brings Arizona Science Center staff and assets into rural districts, where tailored programs are developed for teachers, students and administrators. This includes professional development programs for teachers, training for administrators, and student programs featuring hands-on STEM projects such as engineering activities and roller-coaster building.

The 2016-17 school year will be the third year West Sedona School is participating in Arizona Science Center’s Rural Communities Outreach Project. Through this unique partnership with Arizona Science Center, teachers either receive professional training, or a Science Center staff member teaches an entire classroom lesson, modeling for teachers how to implement hands-on STEM learning in the classroom. This is followed by training sessions for the entire staff, which will take place twice per month this school year.

“The teachers love it,” says Scott Keller, principal of West Sedona School. “As a rural school, without this program, we wouldn’t have access to the resources that Arizona Science Center provides. Additionally, we have a high English Language Learner population, so the more hands-on, visual learning we can do, the better,” said Keller. “But these hands-on STEM projects aren’t just great for ELL learners. They’re effective for all learners.”

“For example, in second grade last year, a teacher did a wind engineering project. Students built sailboats on straws and used a fan to see whose sail would capture the most wind. The whole class was super engaged. The kids all wanted to show me their boats. There was one hundred percent student engagement.”

Teacher feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Keller explains that the strongest feedback he received came from an 18-year veteran teacher who said that after watching a Science Center staff member implement a hands-on STEM lesson in her classroom with her children, she felt more confident than ever doing it herself going forward.

West Sedona is the first school in Arizona to seek national accreditation through the AdvancED STEM certification program. In order to earn accreditation in January 2017, Keller is implementing additional training for staff and more curriculum based around STEM.

“This program is unique because it enables us to bring a focus on STEM education to rural schools that would otherwise not have access to such training and resources,” said Dr. Andi Furlis, Arizona Science Center Chief Learning Officer Center. “The APS Foundation grant will help us continue to grow this program that opens the eyes and minds of so many students in rural Arizona to the possibilities of STEM.”

“The mission of the APS Foundation is to support STEM education, because it is a critical component to prepare our youth for the jobs of the future,” said Tina Marie Tentori, Executive Director of the APS Foundation. “Arizona Science Center’s staff are pros at bringing STEM to life through hands-on interactive activities, and this program brings Science Center resources to rural Arizona students who otherwise wouldn’t have such an opportunity.”

#### **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 screen Irene P. Flinn Theater. CREATE at Arizona Science Center, adjacent to the main building, is the newest addition. This 6,500 square foot community maker space provides workshops, including 3D printing, laser cutting, microcontrollers, woodworking and sewing. The Center also offers various programs for all ages. Programs include 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 APS Foundation**

The APS Foundation is committed to making a deep impact in Arizona communities and does so by supporting statewide nonprofits that advance knowledge in the field of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education. The Foundation supports a wide range of educational initiatives that target both students and teachers in order to keep the next generation of Arizona’s workforce strong and competitive.

Privately endowed by Pinnacle West Capital Corp. in 1981 as an independent 501(c)(3) organization, the APS Foundation distributes an average of \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million per year through a bi-annual grant process. Since its inception, it has invested nearly \$38 million in Arizona nonprofits. For more information, please visit [www.aps.com/corporategiving](http://www.aps.com/corporategiving) and click on the Foundation link.

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