

Member news & Notes

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT

Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation

BY COLIN HEFFINGER

» Wisdom begins with wonder. At DASEF, the Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation, there is more than just understanding the Earth and its role in our universe that ignites imaginations. Space science, earth science, and STEM make up the intellectual enrichment shaping the foundation of futures for beyond the 600,000 students, their families, and instructors involved. The defining cornerstone of DASEF's impact on the regional community is their dedicated efforts to provide extraordinary experiences and knowledge to shape future generations.

For over 31 years, DASEF has provided its resources to K-12 schools, state-wide libraries, youth groups, and families throughout Delaware and five surrounding states. DASEF also maintains higher learning affiliations with NASA Space Grant, the Delaware Environmental Observing System at the University of Delaware, and Georgia Institute of Technology, to mention a few. DASEF has awarded over \$274,957 in scholarships to 1,433 cadets within its summer destination academies and provided recommendation letters to help push students skyward into their future careers.

Max Classen, a prior attendee and current counselor, states, "DASEF was instrumental in giving me the desire to work in the aerospace industry. With

that desire and a strong recommendation from Dr. Wright, I have taken a leadership position in a multicultural Polaris Engineering project designing a buoyancy controlled hovering rover."

Dr. Stephanie Wright, president and CEO of DASEF, with the assistance of a dedicated staff, has continued to focus on educating others about the science and technology of earth and space since its founding in 1989. "Our mission is to increase the motivation and ability of K-12 students and teachers to meet current and future intellectual/workplace demands," Stephanie elaborates. "DASEF strives to improve the quality of life through its advocacy of education, the environment, and strengthening the workforce."

Even as the pandemic rippled across the globe, DASEF remains dedicated to providing uniquely exciting and educational experiences remotely and throughout its beautiful campus in Smyrna. Visitors are welcomed to safely explore the extensive outdoor exhibits, featuring a variety of representations of the Earth and space.

Wandering through DASEF's 39-acre site is an out of this world experience. Upon starting, visitors are captivated by the Wisdom Begins with Wonder sculp-



ture, a work of art constructed and envisioned by Stephanie and Charles Parks. The Scaled Planetary Walk spanning the length of the campus showcases stones that represent the Sun and each planet at a scale of 2.333 million miles per foot to portray the accurate distance between each on a relatable level. Onward is the Mountjoy Observatory, which provides a way to safely view the sky in high detail. The Galaxy Garden is a half-acre spiral garden with different plants that represent parts of the Milky Way Galaxy, portraying various points and clusters in the sky as well as the arms that make up our entire galaxy. Most of these outdoor exhibits are available to the public for experiencing during business hours. View DASEF's website at www.dasef.org for more information.

"DASEF is focused on the vision of educational and community impact in the long run," Stephanie reflects. "As we continue to finish our Innovation Technology Exploration Center (ITEC), we look forward to enriching the lives of many generations to come."