



UT Permian, YWLA, and Boys & Girls Club Partner with WEX Foundation to Launch NASA Grant for Space Education Initiative

ODESSA, TEXAS, UNITED STATES, May 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- UT Permian Basin, Young Women's Leadership Academy (YWLA) of Midland, and Boys & Girls Club of the Permian Basin are proud to announce a collaboration with the WEX Foundation on a NASA grant of \$800,000.

UTPB is one of three university sub-awardees on the grant. The goal is to promote a STEM-based space education, called New Worlds Await You – Second Generation (NWAY II).

YWLA and Boy & Girls Club of the Permian Basin middle school students will be offered a NASA-commissioned curriculum by UTPB students studying to become STEM teachers. The project's focus is to develop and implement a model to train teachers in NASA space exploration concepts and place them in rural and underserved communities, including West Texas.

"Through this partnership, pre-service teachers, under the guidance of professors, will provide authentic NASA STEM engagement activities to existing after-school programs in regional middle schools. For students in the community, this provides an engaging opportunity to complete hands-on STEM small group work, while exposing students to STEM career options.

For our pre-service teachers, current UTPB education students, the project will serve as a tool to provide high impact experiences, thus, strengthening the pool of STEM trained middle school teachers that will serve our community upon graduation and certification," said Paula Gutierrez, UTPB Biology Lecturer and UTPB NWAY II Principal Investigator.

"YWLA is proud to partner with the WEX Foundation and UTPB in a groundbreaking initiative to train teachers in the latest NASA-supported STEM-based learning model for space education and place them in a middle school teaching milieu," said Laura Doughty, school principal.

"Offering this unique, project-based space science exploration curriculum to YWLA middle school students will enhance their mastery of STEM learning and put the possibility of a vast array of aerospace careers on their radar screen. The project is meant to inspire young women, who are vastly underrepresented in STEM fields, to become part of the next generation of our nation's aerospace innovators, leaders and entrepreneurs. The NWAY II program is a valuable addition to YWLA's rigorous college preparatory program."

“This type of learning is exactly what we aim for in our daily programming. The biggest benefit is that we get to do this alongside UTPB & YWLA, two education powerhouses that already work directly with our club kids and leadership. When we collaborate our efforts are compounded to greater outcomes for kids in the Basin,” said Andra Lancaster Jones, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Permian Basin.

Sam Ximenes, founder and Board chair of the WEX Foundation, added, “This is our second major NWAY award from NASA, tasking us with STEM-space outreach to bring hands-on space education to rural classrooms across the region. NWAY II aligns significantly with YWLA’s focus on excellence in college preparation, with the aim of placing more young people, happily in this case young women, on the path of aerospace STEM education, in subjects such as robotics, remote sensing, orbital mechanics, astronomy, space medicine, space architecture, and more.”

About the WEX Foundation

The WEX Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) NASA education partner based in San Antonio, Texas, dedicated to inspiring the next generation of space investigators, innovators and leaders. Our purpose is “Advancing Careers in Space.” WEX is committed to diversifying and enriching the space-STEM workforce by tapping the talent of young people, including underserved students who are typically underrepresented in STEM fields, such as girls and children of color. NWAY II is the latest in the WEX series of NASA-commissioned space-STEM learning programs for middle and high school students.

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