



The IMPACT REPORT 2025-2026

*Investing in
Mars Students*

*Strengthening
Our Community*



\$39,523

TEACHER GRANTS

Investing in innovative classroom ideas that inspire learning.



\$31,550

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

21 scholarships administered and presented to Mars seniors.



14

PROJECTS FUNDED

Enhancing opportunities across every school in the Mars Area School District.



HUNDREDS

STUDENTS IMPACTED

Empowering curiosity, building confidence and creating brighter futures.

INSIDE THIS REPORT

- Year in Review
- Teacher Grant Highlights
- Scholarships & Awards Ceremony
- New Planet Foundation Project
- Call to action for our Teachers!
- Thank you to our Sponsors!
- Ways you can help

OUR MISSION

The Mars Planet Foundation funds innovative classroom grants that enhance learning opportunities for Mars students and oversees scholarships that recognize and support graduating seniors.



2025-2026

YEAR IN REVIEW

Thank you

to our donors,
volunteers, and
community members
who make our work
possible!



TEACHER GRANTS REVIEW

14

PROJECTS
FUNDED

\$39,523

INVESTED IN TEACHER
GRANTS

The Mars Planet Foundation gives teachers funding to bring creative ideas and new learning experiences to their students.

2025-2026 PROJECTS FUNDED

PRIMARY CENTER

Versatiles self-checking Math \$2,680

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Rubik's Cube Algorithm Project\$2,560

CENTENNIAL

Battle of the Books Reading \$8,800

PBIS - Positive Behavior Initiative \$1,700

Unitree Go2Walking Robot \$3,894

CHOMP Saw Cardboard Cutter \$2,022

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Entrepreneurship Recipe Book Project.....\$428

HIGH SCHOOL

College in the High School tuition..... \$450

Roller Coaster Physics..... \$8,186

AP Research at Heinz History Center \$550

Recycling in Our Community Project \$1,038

Point Park Media Day \$415

High School Tech Ed TV Project \$3,800

Ombea Response Pad Clickers \$3,000



Thank you

to our amazing teachers for inspiring our students every day and for your creativity and dedication!



SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW

21

SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED

\$31,550

IN SCHOLARSHIPS
ADMINISTERED

The Foundation assists the scholarship process and celebrates seniors at the Annual Academic Excellence & Scholarship Awards ceremony.

SCHOLARSHIP

TTL AMOUNT

BC3 Pioneer Scholarship	\$1,000
Don McCleary Scholarship	\$2,100
Helen Werner Anderson Memorial Scholarship	\$2,000
Kean Foundation for the Arts Scholarship	\$2,000
Kean Foundation STEM Scholarship	\$2,000
Kristine Schindler Memorial Scholarships (2).....	\$4,000
Mars Area High School Hockey Scholarships (2).....	\$1,000
Mars Backstop Club Baseball Player Scholarship.....	\$1,950
Mars Cheer Boosters Education Scholarships (2).....	\$1,500
Mars HS Girls Basketball Boosters Scholarship	\$1,000
Mars Aquatic Club Scholarships (2).....	\$1,000
Mars Planet Foundation Achieve Scholarships (3).....	\$3,000
Mars Planet Foundation Education Scholarship	\$2,500
Mars Planet Foundation School Spirit Scholarship	\$2,500
William R. "Beel" Neel Scholarship	\$4,000



Congratulations

to all of our scholarship recipients

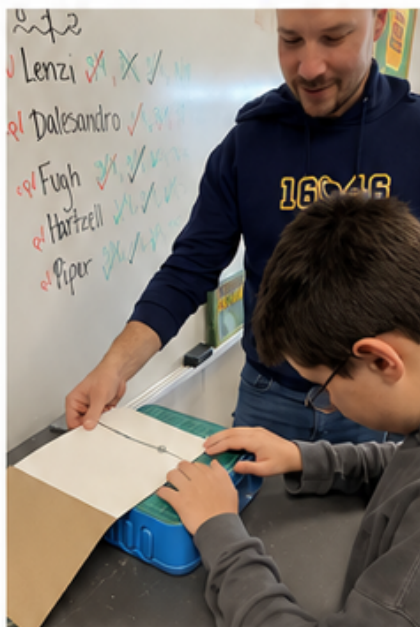


We are excited to see the impact
that you will make!



CHOMPSAW CARDBOARD CUTTERS

With the support of a **\$2,022** Mars Planet Foundation grant, 9 ChompSaws were purchased for the Centennial STEAM Makerspace. These student-safe tools make it easy to precisely cut cardboard for projects using the Engineering & Design Process.



UNITREE GO2 ROBOT DOG

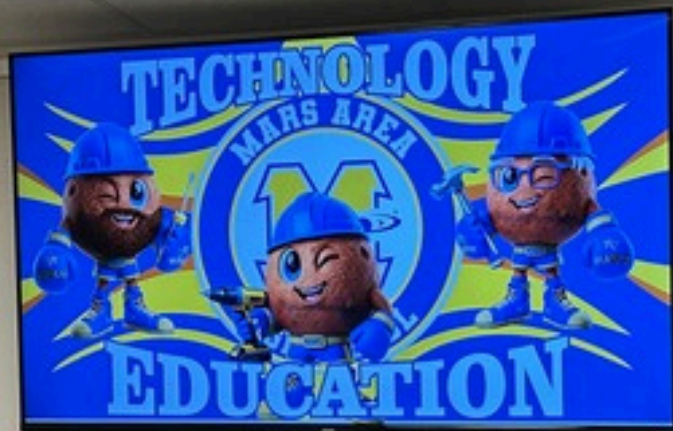
Centennial Students had a chance to meet, interact, and program a new robot dog during their STEAM Classes thanks to a **\$3,894** grant from the Mars Planet Foundation. They were exploring this new technology, analyzing the use of sensors and navigation tools, in order to get the dog to do tricks like hand stands. This new addition to the STEAM Classroom will allow our students to learn how some of the latest robotic innovations in our world utilizes a variety of technology advancements on advanced levels.



The UnitreeGo2 Robot Dog has been a huge hit since being introduced to our school this spring!

— Mr. Churilla





Bringing Info to Every Student

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded **\$3,800** to support a new digital information network throughout Mars Area High School.

Using large display monitors and Raspberry Pi technology, staff and students created a system that shares announcements, weather, school events, athletic information, club news, and student achievements throughout the building.

Our goal is to mount several more TVs throughout the building. Thank you again for this opportunity."

— Ray Machusko, Shawn Haywiser & Jason Roos

The project was designed and implemented by staff and students in the Technology Education Department, giving students valuable hands-on experience while improving communication across the school.



The next time you visit Mars Area High School and see one of these displays, remember, **you helped make it possible**. Thank you for investing in our students and their future.

6th Grade Reading Relay



Bringing Reading to Life

The Mars Planet Foundation funded the 6th Grade Reading Relay through a **\$8,800** grant, providing classroom sets of hardcover novels and Owala water bottles for winning teams.

Throughout the school year, students read together, discussed books, and prepared for the annual Reading Relay competition. The project encouraged teamwork, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of reading.

“

"The project is going SO well! The 6th graders are extremely invested and excited about the upcoming competition. It's wonderful to see them so dedicated to their books for the relay, just like we hoped!"

— Ms. Lenzi & Ms. Mortier

”

“

"Reading Relay was one of my favorite days of the school year. I had a great time competing and having fun at the same time!" -Ally C.

“

"I loved working together with my team to test what we knew about our books!"

— Avery C.



The Mars Planet Foundation was able to help teachers:



Purchase classroom sets of high-interest novels



Encourage students to read throughout the school year



Build teamwork through the Reading Relay competition



Award Owala water bottles to championship teams



Create excitement around reading that will continue for years

Heinz History Center Trip

Thanks to a **\$550** grant from the Mars Planet Foundation, students in Mrs. Hoffmann and Mr. Stutzman's AP Research classes enjoyed an incredible day of learning at the Detre Library & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center.

The Students on the Trip...

- ✓ Learned how to conduct primary source research from archive professionals.
- ✓ Explored historical resources connected to their individual research topics.
- ✓ Toured the Heinz History Center exhibits.

“Gianna G. -
"I truly gained a lot from this field trip. I went in somewhat unsure about what I wanted to research, but I left with not only evidence and sources for my project, but also with the resolve to pursue a creative project."
”



Instruction on primary source research from archive experts.



Exploring primary sources related to student research topics.



Working with historical documents from local archives.

Quotes from Students:

Madelyn P. -
"The archives staff set out materials specifically for my topic, and it showed me a lot about the research I want to do and what my goal of the project is! I plan on coming back to use those archives in my literature review part of my paper!"

Paul K. -
"Our field trip today was amazing! I have never gotten a chance to go to the John Heinz History Center, and I was blown away. Their collection of archives on Pittsburgh history and culture is remarkable. Overall, our field trip was one I will definitely remember, and I really appreciate the opportunity for our class to experience this together."



Celebrating Achievement

Mars HS Annual Academic Awards



A Night to Celebrate Student Success

Every spring, the Mars Planet Foundation joins Mars Area School District in celebrating the outstanding achievements of graduating seniors during the Annual Academic Awards Ceremony.

2025-2026 Scholarship Recipients

BC3 Pioneer Scholarship — Keira Matheis

Don McCleary Trade Scholarship — James Thomas

Helen Werner Anderson Memorial Scholarship — Gianna Goodman

Kean Foundation for the Arts Scholarship — Audrey Stephenson

Kean Foundation STEM Scholarship — Thomas Dressen

Mars Aquatic Club Scholarship — Lauren Becker & Preston Heynes

Mars Area High School Hockey Scholarship — Grant Weaver & Matthew Lestitian

Mars Backstop Club Baseball Player Scholarship — Braden Schmitt

Mars Cheer Boosters Education Scholarship — Addison Vargo & Riley Carrel

Mars High School Girls Basketball Booster Scholarship — Mya Moore

Mars Planet Foundation Education Scholarship — Gianna Goodman

Mars Planet Foundation School Spirit Scholarship — Riley Carrel

William R. "Beel" Neel Scholarship — Gianna Goodman

*not listed (3) MPF Achieve (2) Kristine Schindler scholarships winners

During this year's event, the Foundation awarded \$31,550 through 21 scholarships, recognizing excellence in academics, career and technical education, leadership, community service, and the arts.

The scholarships listed are funded by the Mars Planet Foundation or administered by the Foundation on behalf of generous community organizations and families. We are honored to help celebrate these outstanding students and congratulate each recipient on their achievements.



REMOVING BARRIERS. CREATING OPPORTUNITIES.

Introducing the LaVerne C. Frick Achieve Fund

*Because every student deserves
the opportunity to succeed.*



EVERY STUDENT DESERVES THE CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE

This year, the Mars Planet Foundation proudly expanded its offerings by creating the LaVerne C. Frick Achieve Fund, a new initiative designed to support Mars Area School District students facing financial hardship.

While many assistance programs provide valuable support, some students still encounter barriers that can prevent them from fully participating in school. The Achieve Fund helps bridge those gaps by providing confidential assistance for educational, enrichment, extracurricular, and career-development opportunities that are not covered through other resources.

Whether it's required vocational equipment, school-related expenses, or other essential needs, the goal is simple:

“No student should miss an
opportunity because of
financial hardship”



WHY THIS FUND MATTERS

- ✓ Supports students with school-related **educational and enrichment** needs.
- ✓ Removes **financial barriers** that may prevent participation.
- ✓ Provides assistance with dignity through a **confidential** referral process.
- ✓ Helps ensure every student has the opportunity to **learn, participate, and succeed.**

HOW IT WORKS

- Initial Fund**
Thanks to an initial **\$15,000** gift, the Foundation launched the program.
- Students Served**
The fund is expected to serve approximately **60-90 students** each year.
- Confidential**
School counselors, principals, teachers, and other designated staff **confidentially** identify student needs. Every request is reviewed without student names or identifying information, ensuring privacy and dignity.
- Focused Support**
The fund does not provide cash assistance or replace existing district programs. Instead, it **fills the gaps** when no other funding source is available.



A COMMUNITY INVESTING IN STUDENTS

The LaVerne C. Frick Achieve Fund reflects the Mars Planet Foundation's belief that every student deserves the chance to participate, learn, and reach their full potential—regardless of financial circumstances.

Together, we're helping remove barriers, create opportunities, and ensure every Mars student has the support they need to thrive.



FEATURED IN 228 TIMES

The launch of the LaVerne C. Frick Achieve Fund was featured by 228 Times.

Read the full story:

www.228times.com/mars-planet-foundation-expands-its-mission-as-new-fund-aims-to-help-students-in-need

TEACHERS!! LET'S BRING YOUR IDEAS TO LIFE!!

Apply for a Mars Planet Foundation
Teacher Grant

⇒ YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE! ⇐



FUND YOUR IDEAS

Get the resources you need to bring creative, engaging projects to life.



IMPACT MORE STUDENTS

Enrich learning experiences and help students explore, create, and succeed.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

We're here to support you every step of the way. We Want you to succeed!

EASY AS
1-2-3!

1

DREAM IT

Think of a project or learning experience **outside of the current curriculum**



2

APPLY

Visit our website to fill out the simple online form



3

PRESENT IT

Join us at one of our monthly board meetings to explain your awesome idea

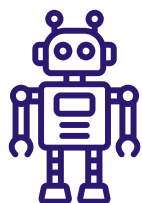


Learn more and apply today!
<https://marsplanetfoundation.org/>



Every grant has the power to inspire, engage, and change lives

⇒ What Could You Do With a Grant? ⇐



Purchase STEM or robotics materials



Create a hands-on learning opportunity



Grow curiosity with a classroom garden



Host a STEM-based event

Thank You

TOGETHER, WE MADE A DIFFERENCE



Because of the generosity of our donors and partners, the Mars Planet Foundation was able to invest in innovative classroom projects and award scholarships that inspire learning and celebrate achievement for Mars students.



SCOREBOARD SPONSORS

- ✓ THOMAS & WILLIAMSON PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- ✓ GEYER CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT, INC.
- ✓ THE GODDARD SCHOOL
- ✓ KRESS RESTORATION
- ✓ EAT'N PARK
- ✓ LEFCON
- ✓ VOGEL DISPOSAL SERVICE, INC.
- ✓ PARACCA INTERIORS
- ✓ FIDIUM (AKA CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS)



EDUCATIONAL IMPROVMENT TAX CREDIT PARTNERS



Through Pennsylvania's Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program, these partners help make innovative learning opportunities possible for Mars Students

Thank You FOR INVESTING IN MARS STUDENTS!



*Together, we're building
brighter futures.*

How You can Help



DONATE

Every gift, large or small, helps fund innovative teacher grants, student scholarships, and educational opportunities throughout the Mars Area School District.

DONATE NOW



BECOME A BUSINESS PARTNER

Grab one of our scoreboard spots or a banner at the MAC (Mars Athletic Complex). Talk to your company about donating EITC funds. Or sponsor a new Scholarship. You can make a HUGE impact.

*Partner with us to
make a difference!*



VOLUNTEER WITH US

Join our Board of Directors or become a Foundation Ambassador. Whether you have a few hours each month or simply want to help at special events, we'd love to have you!

*Your time and talents
are invaluable!*



SHARE OUR MISSION

Follow us on social media, attend Foundation events, and help spread the word about the impact we're making together.

*Together we can inspire
even more support!*

Meet Our Leadership

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Beth Ziegler — President
- Sandy Page — Vice President
- Kim Vandall — Treasurer
- Kelly Dunn — Secretary
- Jeannie Irwin
- Amy Riggio
- Amanda Salkeld
- Vickie Zaccari
- Jennifer DiCuccio — School Board Representative
- Madelynn Marburger Barkley — School Board Representative

Our Ambassadors

FOUNDATION AMBASSADORS

- Lee Ann Riner
- Tricia Holland
- Doug Wolf
- Robin Parsons

DISTRICT LIAISON

- Dr. Travis Mineard



Upcoming Board Meetings

The Foundation usually meets the third Tuesday of Every month in the District's Administrative Office Board Room.

All meetings begin at 6:30pm

CONTACT US:

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🌐 <http://marsplanetfoundation.org>