

# The Mars Planet Foundation

# Newsletter

[marsplanetfoundation.org](http://marsplanetfoundation.org)

## THE HISTORY

Founded in 2009, as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization, the Mars Planet Foundation serves the Mars Area School District by providing opportunities to enhance and enrich the learning endeavors of each student.



## Mars Planet Foundation Members:

- Board Members**  
 Beth Ziegler- President  
 Carol Knox- Vice President  
 Amy Riggio- Treasurer  
 Tricia Holland- Secretary  
 Kevin Hagen  
 Stacy Palmer  
 Liz Porco  
 Lee Ann Riner  
 Jenn Stuber  
 Doug Wolf  
 Vickie Zaccari

**MASD Administration**  
Dr. Elizabeth McMahon

**Ambassadors**  
Jennifer Giesler  
Diana Jacoby  
Robin Parsons  
Bethany Ratcliffe  
Nicole Thurner

### In this edition:

[Highlights of recent teacher grants awarded.](#)

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[Learn ways to help the Mars Planet Foundation continue to grow.](#)

[Learn about business tax credit](#)

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## Mission

The Mars Planet Foundation focuses on awarding Teacher Grants throughout each school year and to inspire teachers to bring innovative new ideas and programs to their students which ultimately enhance their learning capabilities. We also oversee scholarships that help to enrich our graduating seniors at the annual Academic Excellence and Scholarship Awards Ceremony.

 [www.facebook.com/MarsPlanetFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/MarsPlanetFoundation)

 [www.instagram.com/marsplanetfoundation/](http://www.instagram.com/marsplanetfoundation/)

 [twitter.com/FoundationMars](http://twitter.com/FoundationMars)

# STUDENTS STEAM INTO DESIGN

## 3D Printers Offer Centennial Students Excitement

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded Mr. Churilla \$1,286.43 to purchase two new 3D printers with state-of-the-art features for the MASD Centennial School STEAM classes.

*"Every year, students in 5th and 6th grade look forward to their 3D Design STEAM class unit where they learn how to design and create their own three-dimensional objects. Thanks to the Mars Planet Foundation, Mars Centennial School was able to purchase two additional Flash Forge 3D printers where students can 3D print the designs they've created. Students are given several tasks to learn the multiple aspects of 3D design using an online program called Tinkercad. They then have the opportunity to create different objects that they are able to print on our new 3D printers. In the spring of 2021, students printed keychains, magnets, and even pencil holders that they designed themselves. Receiving the two additional 3D printers from the Mars Planet Foundation allowed the opportunity for students' designs to be printed much quicker. The new 3D printers have raised the excitement level about the 3D design process and gives them the full learning experience of 21st century technology."*

- Mr. Chris Churilla



Are you a Mars teacher with a great idea?

The Mars Planet Foundation is looking to fund your grant requests. Find out more information at <https://marsplanetfoundation.org/>

# ROBOTS GAIN STEAM

## FINCH BOTS Engage Students

### Upcoming Mars Planet Foundation Board Meetings

All MPF Board Meetings are held in the MASD Board Room starting at 6:30pm.

- Tuesday, February 21st
- Tuesday, March 21st
- Tuesday, April 18th
- Wednesday, May 10th
- Tuesday, June 20th  
(Room TBD)
- Tuesday, August 15th
- Tuesday, September 19th
- Tuesday, October 24th
- Tuesday, November 21st
- Wednesday,  
January 10th, 2024

### Ambassadors Wanted

The Mars Planet Foundation is seeking individuals interested in volunteering with the Foundation. Ambassadors are non-voting members who assist the Foundation Board at their level of availability and interest. This role is perfect for those who want to be involved but need flexibility in terms of their commitment. Ambassadors are vital to the Foundation's success!

If you have any questions, please e-mail us at [admin@marsplanetfoundation.com](mailto:admin@marsplanetfoundation.com)

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded \$2,196 to Mr. Churilla to purchase 20 Finch Robots to be utilized by all 5th and 6th grade students.

*"Robots are an engaging part of our district's STEAM program that teaches students coding, programing, and problem solving, and twenty-first century skills. The Mars Planet Foundation awarded us a grant, in conjunction with a PPG Grant, to purchase 20 Finch Robots. The finch robots pair with iPads to be coded and programed to perform a multitude of tasks using motors and sensors. They also are equipped with a multitude of programing languages on different skill levels. The Finch Robots are a great addition to the Mars Centennial STEAM program and will be used in a variety of lessons and units to enhance coding, programing, and mathematics skills. For example, the students will be using the robots to draw geometric shapes which will require them to use measurement skills (including different angles) which covers a multitude of math standards. The robots have a device that allow them to hold markers and writing utensils that allows them to draw while they are following a program that was coded by the students. These robots will be able to be used over and over again to incorporate every aspect of STEAM- science, technology, engineering, art, and math!"*

- Mr. Churilla



### Save the Date

Walk Around Mars returns for a Spring 2023 edition.  
Registration opens February 15th.

Mars Planet Foundation is now seeking donations and sponsors for the event.

# MINIGOLF IS NOT JUST A FAMILY FUN TIME

Joint effort between Physical Education & STEAM

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded \$884.82 to Mr. Churilla & Mrs. Coon to implement a collaborated project between the STEAM and Physical Education classes at the Mars Centennial School.

*"Thanks to the Mars Planet Foundation, the 6th grade Miniature Golf STEAM & Physical Education project is able to be bigger and better! We were awarded a grant to purchase 12 pieces of authentic golf turf that was used as the main base for the class golf course. These large pieces of turf allowed the students to expand their course and create a more realistic miniature golf course. This project is a collaboration between the 6th grade STEAM and Physical Education classes at Mars Centennial School. Each class is in charge of designing and building obstacles that will create one hole on a school miniature golf course. In P.E. class, the students learn golf etiquette, putting skills, as well as golf par and scoring. This whole project is a showcase of collaboration, between students, teachers, and the community. Along with the grant, we also received Wiffle golf balls that are used while the students play the course. The light golf balls allow the course to be played authentically while not damaging any of the delicate obstacles that the students created. A Family Night Event will be planned soon for students to showcase this project!"*

– Mr. Churilla



## 2023 Scholarships Available

Numerous scholarship opportunities for Mars Area seniors are listed on the Mars Planet Foundation website, the District's website, and Naviance.

Any questions regarding eligibility should be directed to the Guidance department senior class advisor, Dr Tina Yankello [tyankello@marsk12.org](mailto:tyankello@marsk12.org).



# Support the Mars Planet Foundation

The Mars Planet Foundation relies on the generous donations of the community and local businesses to provide teacher grants, student scholarships and overall support to the growth of students. There are many ways in which you can get involved. Please consider volunteering your time, making a personal donation, or making a corporate donation.

To donate please go to [marsplanetfoundation.org](http://marsplanetfoundation.org)

## Give a little. Help a lot.

Parents, alumni and friends can maximize personal contributions to the Mars Planet Foundation with corporate matching gifts. By taking advantage of a company's matching gift benefit, you may be able to double or even triple the amount of an individual contribution. To find out if your company has a matching gift policy, please check with your HR department.

# POPPIN' SOUNDS

## Fun Sensory Toy Makes Learning Hands-On

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded \$291.24 to Mrs. Huggins to purchase lowercase Pop-Its to enhance the reading curriculum.

*"The kids always have so much fun when we get to use the Pop Its during class. Using interactive tools like the Pop Its really reinforces the skills we are learning. I love to use them in whole group instruction, but they are so helpful for small group intervention too. During our WIN time, I use them to work with students to reinforce the skills we learn during whole group, or we work on remedial skills they may be struggling with. I have also found worksheets and word cards that pair so well with the Pop Its to make them even more effective. They have really helped with our new phonics program Foundations. We can use them to practice our new Foundations Trick Words or Words of the Day. We have even used them to identify what punctuation the different types of sentences need."*

- Mrs. Huggins



# BLAST OFF TO READING

## Rocket Readers Grant

Mrs. Misiura and Mrs. Zollner were awarded \$1,500 towards the Mars Area Elementary School Rocket Reader program.

*"As an incentive, our Mars Area Elementary School reading students have the opportunity to log at-home reading minutes and earn free books through our Rocket Reader program. The program is entirely optional, but we strongly encourage our students to read for pleasure in their free time. Over the past few years, the Rocket Reader program was lacking participation as our book prize selection dwindled. Last school year, we had 25 students participate in the program with a total of 51 reading logs submitted. Feeling like we could achieve a better turnout, we wanted to improve the program and upgrade our book selection. We decided to apply for a grant from the Mars Planet Foundation.*

*After receiving our grant, adding hundreds of new books to our Rocket Reader collection, and promoting the program, we are proud to report that we currently have 43 kids participating! They have already turned in 83 reading logs, and it is only halfway through the school year! We can't wait to see the end of year results. Thank you, Mars Planet Foundation, for helping make our program a success!"*

- Mrs. Misiura & Mrs. Zollner



# Help Your Business With A Tax Credit

## Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC)

Businesses in Pennsylvania can receive up to a **90% tax credit** by donating to the Mars Planet Foundation through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. Rather than fund a project on the other side of the state, you can direct the tax dollars your business will **already** be paying to help provide a quality education for children **right here in our area.**

Interested? You should be. Please read below for more information. Contact us, and we will explain the benefits of donating and guide you in applying.

### Tax Credit Program

The PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) established the **Educational Improvement Tax Credit** (EITC) program to allow businesses to redirect their state tax liability to fund educational initiatives. Program participants can receive up to a 90% tax credit against their Pennsylvania state tax liability by donating to the **Mars Planet Foundation** (MPF).

Here are examples of how the program works.

Donation to MPF	PA Tax Credit Reduction (90% of contribution) *	Net Federal Tax Reduction (at 37% tax rate)	Out of Pocket Cost to Your Business
\$15,000	(\$13,500)	(\$555)	\$945
\$10,000	(\$9,000)	(\$370)	\$630
\$5,000	(\$4,500)	(\$185)	\$315
\$1,000	(\$900)	(\$37)	\$63

\*Requires a 2-year commitment for a 90% tax credit; otherwise, it is a 75% tax credit for a 1-year commitment

We realize you already pay school taxes. However, through the MPF, your donation plays a vital role in creating programs that would normally go unfunded and that directly promote our children's education and growth.

**One of the best parts?** You will know where your "tax dollars" are going, because we will tell you. Subscribe to our newsletter on our website @ [marsplanetfoundation.com](http://marsplanetfoundation.com) to be informed about the wonderful things the Mars Planet Foundation is doing, with your valuable support. Thank you!

For more information

- Visit: <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/educational-improvement-tax-credit-program-eitc>

Contact: [admin@marsplanetfoundation.org](mailto:admin@marsplanetfoundation.org)



**TO PAY LESS  
STATE TAXES!**



# Teacher Grant Program

The Mars Planet Foundation is dedicated to funding programs, projects, and resources that enhance teaching and learning.

## How to Apply

1. Build your idea and gather information
2. Scan QR code and complete the application
3. Submit for approval



## Bring Your Ideas to Life

- Build on existing ideas, projects, & curriculum
- Maximize resources
- Collaborate with colleagues

## Recently Awarded



- Giant Mars and Moon Maps
- VEX IQ Robotics Kits
- IPEVO Document Cameras
- White Board Tables
- We Both Read Book Sets

## More Information

<https://marsplanetfoundation.org/teacher-grants>

[admin@marsplanetfoundation.com](mailto:admin@marsplanetfoundation.com)



# Mars Planet Foundation

presents



Join us in the 2023 edition of the 3-week virtual walk, as a community, around the circumference of Mars for a goal of a total of 13,263 miles!

Sponsored by Rhoads Orthodontics.

WHEN: April 16th through May 6th, 2023

REGISTRATION: February 15th through March 15th  
<https://fundraise.givesmart.com/vf/WalkAroundMars>

Proceeds benefit the Mars Planet Foundation which supports unique educational initiatives for MASD teachers and students.