

The Mars Planet Foundation

Winter 2024 Newsletter

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.



MISSION

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

Mars Planet Foundation Members:

Board Members
Beth Ziegler- President
Doug Wolf- Vice President
Amy Riggio- Treasurer
Tricia Holland- Secretary
Maura DiGioia
Kevin Hagen
Carol Knox
Liz Porco
Aaron Rose
Kim Vandall
Vickie Zaccari
MASD Administration
Dr. Elizabeth McMahon

Ambassadors
Jennifer Giesler
Heliana Galvis-Orr
Robin Parsons
Bethany Ratcliffe
Lee Ann Riner

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Winter 2024

Positive Planets

New program is a slam dunk at the Primary Center

Upcoming Mars Planet Foundation Board Meetings

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

- February 20th
- March 19th
- April 16th
- May 21st
- June 18th (location TBD)
- July 9th (if needed) (Location TBD)
- August 20th
- September 17th
- October 15th
- November 19th
- January 15th 2025

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded \$2500 to Mrs. Jessica Semler, Principal at the Mars Area Primary Center, to fund a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiative. PBIS is an evidence-based, cost-effective, systems approach for establishing the social culture needed for schools to be effective learning environments for all students.

"The Mars Area Primary Center was so appreciative to receive a Mars Planet Foundation Grant this year! This was the first year of implementing our PBIS initiative and thanks to this grant, we were able to kick-off the school year with a school-wide assembly featuring "Jim Basketball Jones." The assembly implemented "The Mars Way" and how students could earn tickets to become "Positive Planets." The remaining funds were used to purchase signs and posters to be displayed throughout the school, as well as prizes to be given to the students when turning in their Positive Planet tickets. The grant was able to include all of our students and staff members and has set our school up for success for many years to come!"

- Mrs. Semler

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



Marine Science Field Trip

High School Students to Travel to Virginia

The Mars Planet Foundation awarded \$8,000 in Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) donation funds to Mr. Peter Black, science teacher at Mars Area High School, to take a group of Mars Area High School students to Wallops Island, Virginia. The group will be taking a 3-night field trip to Marine Science Consortium adjacent to Chincoteague Island in Virginia from April 24-27, 2024.

The awarded funds will help to reduce the cost of the trip for students. The trip includes: transportation, housing and meals. Educational experiences include: Oceanography lab and cruise preparation, Oceanography research cruise, Intertidal studies, Micro & Macro Organism lab, Dune ecology, Wetland ecology and Maritime Forest lectures and field studies. Stay tuned for the Summer edition of this newsletter for an update on the trip!



AP Exam Fee Reimbursement

The Mars Planet Foundation was proud to reintroduce the reimbursement of AP exam fees for certain students during the 2022-2023 school year through the provision of a \$742 grant from EITC donation funds. With cooperation from Mrs. Lindsay Rosswog, Principal of Mars Area High School, the Foundation was able to continue this tradition through the provision of a \$1,166 grant from EITC donation funds this past fall. With the support of our generous EITC donor businesses, the Foundation hopes to continue to be able to provide this grant for years to come. Read on to find out more about how your business can direct your tax dollars to the Mars Planet Foundation through the EITC program!

2024 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, Mrs. Colleen Tosadori CTosadori@marsk12.org. Applications are due to the guidance department by March 15, 2024.



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

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.

Spring Fundraiser

MPF to offer Marty water bottle stickers & Croc Jibbitz



We are pleased to offer Marty water bottle stickers & Mars Planets Croc Jibbitz for purchase at the upcoming building open houses.

2/22 -- Middle School
2/29 -- Elementary School
4/4 -- Centennial
4/18 -- Primary Center

Please visit our table to support our fundraiser!
One for \$3 or Two for \$5
CASH ONLY

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 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



**TO PAY LESS
STATE TAXES!**

Advertise Your Business

Support the Foundation with a Scoreboard Advertisement

Mars Athletic Complex (MAC) Scoreboard advertising opportunity!

- One (1) 31" H x 51" W slot at the top - \$3,000 per season
- Two (2) 30" H x 72" W slots at the bottom - \$5,000 per season

Nearly 9,500 adults attended varsity events at the MAC during the 2022-2023 school year. If you are interested in advertising at the MAC or desire more information, please send an email to admin@marsplanetfoundation.com.





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



- Mrs. Semler - Positive Behavior Initiative at the Primary Center
- Mr. Black - High School Marine Science Field Trip

More Information

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

admin@marsplanetfoundation.com