



MEDIA CONTACT:

Jordan Miller

jmiller@grouppgordon.com

212-784-5703

New York Giants' Victor Cruz, Astronaut Leland Melvin, "Science Bob" Pflugfelder among Leaders Announced as Judges for Nationwide "Science Everywhere" Challenge

Panel of 12 judges will award \$25,000 in prizes to classroom teachers through Overdeck and Simons Foundations, which are also matching nearly \$500,000 in donations from the public

NEW YORK – February 22, 2017 – [Overdeck Family Foundation](#) and the [Simons Foundation](#) today announced the judging panel for "[Science Everywhere](#)," their initiative to catalyze hands-on, engaging math and science out-of-school learning in partnership with [DonorsChoose.org](#). Science Everywhere challenges teachers across the country to submit ideas on the DonorsChoose.org platform for creative projects that inspire students to explore math and science outside the classroom. The foundations are providing nearly half a million dollars to match every donation, with the aim of engaging the public to collectively deliver nearly \$1 million in science and math supplies to classrooms nationwide. The panel of 12 judges, comprising six national leaders in math and science and six exceptional teachers ("Science Ambassadors"), will award five \$5,000 prizes to the teachers who submit the best ideas.

"A lot of my own early science learning took place outside of a classroom thanks to Sister Fortunata, a fifth-grade teacher at my Catholic girls' school, who encouraged every one of her students to do extra take-home assignments that were designed as interactive family learning activities," **said Marilyn Simons, president of the Simons Foundation.** "I still remember learning about crystals by growing rock candy, learning about spores by growing mold in a dish, and—my favorite—exploring the solar system with a portable planetarium. Science Everywhere will give so many more students the same opportunity and learning experience that I had."

The six national leader judges are:

- **Victor Cruz:** Former wide receiver for the New York Giants and founder of the [Victor Cruz Foundation](#), which aims to increase the number of underrepresented kids interested in career fields related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) while simultaneously promoting positive change in the lives of youth today through innovative educational programs

- **Leland Melvin:** Professional football player-turned NASA astronaut who served on two space flights during his career at NASA and [now works](#) to inspire the next generation of math and science explorers
- **“Science Bob” Pflugfelder:** Teacher, author, and presenter known for his [creative science experiments](#) as a regular guest on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* and other television shows, as well as his popular YouTube videos
- **Leslie Vosshall:** Neuroscientist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, currently the Robin Chemers Neustein Professor and Head of the Laboratory of Neurogenetics and Behavior at [The Rockefeller University](#), as well as an investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute
- **Laura Overdeck:** Chair of Overdeck Family Foundation and founder and president of Bedtime Math
- **Marilyn Simons:** President of the Simons Foundation and advocate for K-12 education

“Math and science learning shouldn’t stop at the classroom door, and these projects will show kids that there’s so much more to explore,” **said Victor Cruz, founder of the Victor Cruz Foundation.** “The Victor Cruz Foundation is committed to encouraging today’s youth to learn and love math and science, and I’m proud to help make that possible through Science Everywhere.”

“My parents were educators who inspired me and so many others to reach for the stars,” **said Leland Melvin, former NASA astronaut and advocate for math and science education.** “I want to honor their legacy by partnering with DonorsChoose.org and Science Everywhere to help unlock these teachers’ great science ideas, to inspire our next generation of STEAM Explorers.”

The six Science Ambassadors come from schools nationwide:

- **Amani Abuhabsah,** Dawes Elementary School (Chicago, IL): Has completed 153 projects with DonorsChoose.org, including [“Understanding the Stresses of Minimum Wage”](#) which allowed students to apply financial literacy concepts to real-life scenarios
- **Angela Bergman,** Westside High School (Omaha, NE): 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) winner
- **Lisa Frank,** Livingston Elementary School (Columbus, OH): Has completed 75 projects with DonorsChoose.org, including a [recycling and upcycling program](#) that students incorporated at home and throughout the school
- **Patrick Honner,** Brooklyn Technical High School (New York, NY): 2013 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) winner; Runner-up for the 2012 Rosenthal Prize for Innovation in Math Teaching
- **Barbara Rice,** Prince Edward County Middle School (Farmville, VA): Funded [“Weekend Weather Kits”](#) project through DonorsChoose.org, which enabled students to observe and record weather events outside of class
- **Claudia Walker,** Murphey Traditional Academy (Greensboro, NC): Career Award for Science and Mathematics Teachers from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund in 2010;

Teacher of the Year at Murphey Traditional Academy in 2009 and 2015; NAS Teacher Advisory Council Member

“I was lucky to have six fabulous math teachers in a row through junior high and high school, as well as our funny and fearless physics teacher Dr. Stoneback. Together they are the reason I went on to major in astrophysics,” **said Laura Overdeck, chair of Overdeck Family Foundation.** “Today, equally superb teachers and national leaders in math and science will help us acknowledge those educators who inspire their students to continue pursuing their curiosity even after the school bell rings.”

Teachers have until Friday, March 24, 2017 to submit qualifying projects on DonorsChoose.org to participate in the match offer and be considered for one of five \$5,000 prizes. The panel of judges will convene over the summer and the winning teachers will be announced on September 5, 2017.

To ensure the winning projects are impactful to student interest in math and science, University of Virginia Professor Robert Tai is conducting a study of how students’ learning and mindset changes through participation in these afterschool activities.

Teachers interested in participating in the challenge can access more information about submitting projects [here](#). Members of the public interested in supporting a classroom project can visit [this page](#) to find a request that speaks to them.

About Overdeck Family Foundation

Demonstrating a passion and commitment to the future of American education, John and Laura Overdeck established the Overdeck Family Foundation in 2011. The foundation seeks to help all kids achieve their greatest potential by funding compelling, innovative programs and projects that have proven, quantifiable results.

About the Simons Foundation

Established in 1994, the Simons Foundation is a private foundation dedicated to advancing the frontiers of research in mathematics and the basic sciences. Science Sandbox, an initiative of the Simons Foundation, seeks to unlock scientific thinking by engaging people with the process of science.

About DonorsChoose.org

Founded in 2000 by a Bronx history teacher, DonorsChoose.org has raised \$500 million for America's classrooms. Teachers come to DonorsChoose.org to request the materials and experiences they need most for their classrooms, and donors give to the projects that inspire them. To date, nearly 2.5 million people and partners have funded projects on the site, reaching 21.6 million students and making DonorsChoose.org the leading platform for supporting U.S. public schools.

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