

News Release: College Park Academy Winners Going to Space Camp

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For Immediate Release

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UPPER MARLBORO, MD – The “Solar Phoenix” team from Prince George’s County Public Schools’ (PGCPS) College Park Academy are winners of the Patriots Technology Training Center’s Solar System Competition, **Mission to Mars Countdown to Launch 2015** (<https://www.patriots-ttc.org/solar-system.html>). As a result, students Charis Houston (Grade 8), Robert Allsbrooks (Grade 8), and Bryce Stephens (Grade 6) will attend an all-expenses-paid week at astronaut training Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama this summer.

“We are very proud of this talented group of students from College Park Academy,” said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer for PGCPS. “They have demonstrated mastery in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects, as well as the exceptional writing and presentation skills it takes to win this competition.”

Eight teams of students from middle schools in Maryland and Washington, DC gathered at the NASA Goddard Space Visitor’s Center to share their research projects, describing challenges and solutions regarding human exploration to Mars to a panel of industry professionals. The teams also completed a computer programming challenge using the Mars Game, a 3-D video game that required teams to work through mathematical and programming problems to assist a rover in navigating its environment, repairing its systems, and regaining contact with a team of human explorers after crash landing on Mars.

To prepare for the competition, team Solar Phoenix interviewed an astronaut and a geochemist from NASA. During the competition, the students presented their research and an original solution to use resources currently found on Mars to grow plants that would thrive in volcanic soil. The team received high marks in all judging categories and bonus points for Exemplary Effort, Creativity, Teamwork, and Promising Solution.

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