

SHORESTYLE



Space campers and counselors take photos after a tour of Virginia Space's Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport Pad OA at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Space camp ignites dreams, LAUNCHES FUTURES

Special to Eastern Shore News

Emma Zisu, 12, decided to leave New York City to spend a week of her summer on the Eastern Shore of Virginia — not because she wanted beach time or to visit Chincoteague's famous ponies but, instead, to take a deep dive into aerospace.

Nearly 200 students from across the country, including Delmarva students, made the same choice — to pursue their passion for space, engineering, robotics, and rocketry at Virginia Space Flight Academy's Space Adventure Camp this summer.

"VSFA gave me an opportunity to put my passion into action to learn a myriad of new things. I am inspired by the counselors, engineers, and technicians I've met at camp. I'm looking forward to starting a new chapter with all I've learned at VSFA," said Zisu.

For six weeks during the summer, up to 30 students per week, ages 11-16, arrive on Virginia's Eastern Shore, ready to learn. The Virginia Space Flight Academy has been fostering such students' intellectual, creative, and social growth for the past 24 years.

The residential camp program operates at Wallops Island. Four weeks of base camp are offered. The curriculum includes robotics, rocketry, and drones. Two weeks of advanced camp are offered, with a more in-depth focus on robotics and aerospace engineering.

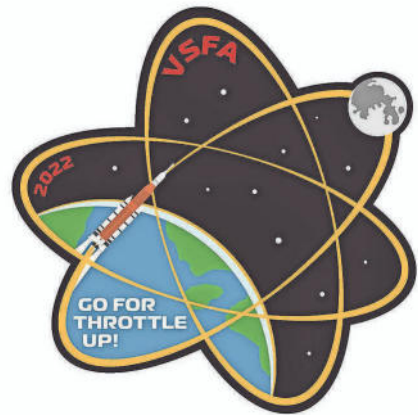
All camp participants are afforded special access tours through a partnership with NASA's Wallops Flight Facility and have the chance to interact with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) academics and professionals.

While enrolled, campers reside at Chincoteague Bay Field Station, a marine science education facility. Camp instructors include certified STEM educators and students pursuing STEM degrees at top universities across the country.

Though the focus is on STEM academics, plenty of other memory-making experiences are provided, including aerial adventures at the new Iron Pony ropes course and summertime favorites, including ice cream from Island Creamery on neighboring Chincoteague Island.

With their continuing commitment to accessibility, the academy provided 30 full scholarships to students from the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Maryland this year, thanks to the generosity of corporate sponsors, foundations, grant awards, and private donors.

"We believe STEM education is critical for preparing youth for the future. We also believe that all students deserve access to exciting, high-quality STEM educational opportunities and mentorship," said VSFA Executive Di-



2022 Space Adventure Camp Mission Patch designed by Camper Emma Zisu.

PROVIDED PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA SPACE FLIGHT ACADEMY

rector Kim Check.

"The Virginia Space Flight Academy offers students a glimpse into the future and highlights potential STEM career pathways. Our camps continue to have a positive impact on children, even long after summer is gone. Summer camp experiences enrich the whole child."

The Virginia Space Flight Academy, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, and grants. In 2023, they will celebrate their 25th anniversary.

Students who missed out on camp this year are encouraged to check out online learning opportunities with VSFA, including a virtual STEM Academy, which includes guided hands-on and online learning at home or in any suitable setting for study. Fall enrollment is now open.

For more information, visit www.vspaceflightacademy.org.



Sami Wiriyotin, from Arlington, Virginia, returned to Week 5 for Advanced Rocketry Camp after attending Week 1 Base Camp earlier this summer.



Campers Ta'Shyra Bonneville and L'ndyn Corbin from Princess Anne, Maryland, enjoy evening fun at the new Iron Pony Adventure Park on Chincoteague Island.



Space camper Morgan Stroup prepares to launch her first rocket.