

MAY 2026



National Girls Collaborative Project



Missouri Girls Collaborative Project Launch – Missouri is now home to a new initiative connecting girls across the state with mentors in STEM careers. The program will feature workshops, coding challenges, and innovation showcases, aiming to close gender gaps in tech and engineering fields.

Quick Insights:

Our Mission

To **CONNECT, CREATE, and COLLABORATE** to transform the STEM experience for all youth and advance gender equity in the field.

Overview

The National Girls Collaborative Project (NGCP) is a network of organizations committed to informing and encouraging girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Founded in 2002 and partially funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the NGCP uses a "NETWORK of NETWORKS" model to bring together thousands of organizations across the United States. The goal is to reduce duplication of effort, share resources and best practices, and maximize the impact of programs dedicated to girls in STEM. The NGCP facilitates collaboration among more than 42,500 organizations, which collectively reach over 20 million girls and 10 million boys.

NGCP'S THREE PRIORITY GOALS

<p>1</p> <p>Build and sustain a network of advocates to provide equitable and inclusive STEM opportunities.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Catalyze equity in STEM from research to practice by providing actionable knowledge that transforms the STEM experience.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Increase our collective impact by strengthening organizational effectiveness and enhancing our fiscal sustainability.</p>
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How to Get Involved?

Whether you're a student, parent, Professional educator, or STEM professional, there are plenty of ways to join the movement. Sign up for local workshops, mentor young innovators, nominate a STEM STL HERO, or share your story with our community. Together, we can expand opportunities, inspire future leaders, and build a stronger STEM network across Missouri.

Empowering the Future:

Why Women in Entrepreneurship Matter



When women succeed as entrepreneurs, they don't just change their own lives; they transform their communities, drive economic growth, and spark innovation. Empowering female-led ventures is not just about equality; it is a vital investment in our collective future.

By the Numbers:

- Nationally: Women are a force to be reckoned with, now owning over **40% of all U.S. businesses**. These firms employ an impressive **12.6 million** people and generate a staggering **\$2.8 trillion** in revenue. The momentum is undeniable, with women-owned businesses growing at nearly double the rate of male-owned firms in recent years.
- In Missouri: Our state is proud to support this thriving sector. Women are key drivers of Missouri's economy, accounting for approximately **38% of all firms**. These businesses provide jobs for nearly 414,000 people and contribute nearly **\$58 billion** to the state's sales, demonstrating the profound and tangible impact women have on our local prosperity.

The Critical Role of STEM:

A massive engine for this future growth lies in the convergence of entrepreneurship and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). While historically underrepresented in these high-growth, high-income fields, women bring essential and unique perspectives that lead to more robust, innovative, and inclusive solutions.

Increased participation in STEM isn't just about filling skill gaps; it is a crucial key for women to design and build the future they want to inhabit. When women combine their entrepreneurial spirit with technical expertise, they don't just participate in the ecosystem; they become the trailblazers and visionaries creating groundbreaking advancements across essential industries like healthcare, information technology, engineering, and environmental science.

Are you ready to be part of this future? Join the movement and discover how you can lead the way!

MO Girls STEM Snapshot of the Month



STEM STL HEROES

Entrepreneur



Highlights:

- Pioneer: Founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop; opened the first store at the Saint Louis Galleria in 1997.
- Innovation: Transformed retail into a hands-on tech and creative experience for children worldwide.
- Legacy: Founder of Delmar DivinE, a hub in St. Louis for social innovation and non-profit community growth.

Nominate a STEM HEROes at Medusasrobotics@gmail.com



STEM Connect



THE ECO-COOL

UPCYCLED INVENTION COMPANY!

Hey **MOgirls!** Summer is the perfect time to activate your inner **CEO** and **STEM** innovator. This month, we challenge you to launch your very own Upcycled Invention Company.



Your mission? Take everyday items that would normally go into the recycling bin or trash, use your **STEM** brain to transform them into a **useful summer product**, and build a **mini-business** around it!



HOW IT WORKS (STEP-BY-STEP)



STEP 1: THE TECH & DESIGN PHASE (THE STEM PART)

Scavenge your house for "trash" (plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, old t-shirts, bottle caps). What summer problem can you solve? Can you build a self-watering planter out of a 2-liter bottle? A solar oven out of a pizza box to bake s'mores? A stylish tote bag braided from old t-shirts?



STEP 2: BRAND YOUR BUSINESS

Every great company needs an identity. Create a catchy business name, design a colorful logo, and write down your company's "Mission Statement" (Why does your product help the planet?).



STEP 3: THE PITCH

Create a 60-second video commercial or design a mock social media flyer explaining what your product is, how it works, and why people should "buy" it.

GRADES K-5 (Junior Inventors)

- Focus on making one cool prototype and drawing a colorful logo.
- Do it at home with a parent, sibling, or neighbor friend!

GRADES 6-8 (Tech Founders)

- Focus on the function. Write out instructions on how to replicate your invention and figure out a "price point" based on how much time it took you to make.
- Form a neighborhood team or work with your Girl Scout troop!

GRADES 9-12 (Eco-CEOs)

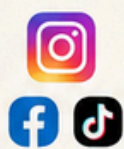
- Level up by creating a basic business plan. Figure out manufacturing constraints, target audience, and film a "Shark Tank" style video pitch.
- Collaborate virtually with friends across Missouri to create a multi-product company!



GET INVOLVED & SHOW US YOUR IDEAS!

Did you create the next big eco-friendly summer gadget? We want to see it!

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS: Have a parent help you send a photo of your prototype or your 60-second video pitch to MOgirlsNGCP@gmail.com, or tag us on social media using **#MOgirlsLEAD**.



YOU MIGHT JUST GET FEATURED IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER!



5 Directions, 1 Mission

[Spirit of St. Louis Air Show & STEM Expo](#)

The Spirit of St. Louis Air Show returns to Chesterfield early this June, featuring an extensive, dedicated STEM Expo alongside the traditional aerial performances. The expo provides an interactive, high-energy environment designed to spark an interest in aviation, aerospace engineering, technology, and math through hands-on activities, flight simulations, and exhibits from local technology companies and educational institutions. It offers a great public venue to see real-world engineering in action.

Key Features: Large-scale aviation and aerospace interactive exhibits, digital flight simulators, and opportunities to meet aerospace professionals.

Date: June 6–7, 2026

More Information: You can find tickets and details on the [Spirit of St. Louis Air Show website](#).

Missouri Women's Entrepreneurship Organizations

[Missouri Women's Business Center \(MoWBC\)](#) - Central MO focus, provides coaching and Kauffman FastTrac.

[Missouri Women's Council](#) - Statewide advocacy and resource clearinghouse for WBE certification.

[Women's Business Development Center \(WBDC\) Midwest](#) - Regional leader in WBE certification and corporate contracting.

[Missouri SBDC \(Small Business Development Centers\)](#) - Statewide technical assistance, financial consulting, and female founder cohorts.

[AltCap](#) - Statewide CDFI providing alternative financing and micro-loans for women-led ventures.

[Urban League Women's Business Center \(WBC\)](#) - Specialized support for minority women entrepreneurs in STL.

[Prosper Women Lead](#) - High-growth accelerator and mentorship for women-led startups.

[WEPOWER](#) - Community-led entrepreneurship with a focus on social equity and accelerators.

[Department of Transportation STEM & Construction Outreach](#)

The Missouri Department of Transportation hosts open community and professional outreach events throughout the state, including targeted site tours and networking days in regions like Kansas City.

In June, these include public site tours connected to major infrastructure developments (such as the Improve I-70 KC project) and collaboration days that emphasize technical careers, civil engineering, and environmental science applications in transit. These events are designed to introduce students and community stakeholders to real-world infrastructure engineering and technical trades without committing to a multi-week program.

Key Features: Live civil engineering project site tours, career pathways exploration, and direct networking with state transit engineers.

Date: Various dates in June

More Information: Visit the MoDOT Community Outreach calendar for specific site tour dates and registration requirements.

[Annual Water Festival at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park](#)

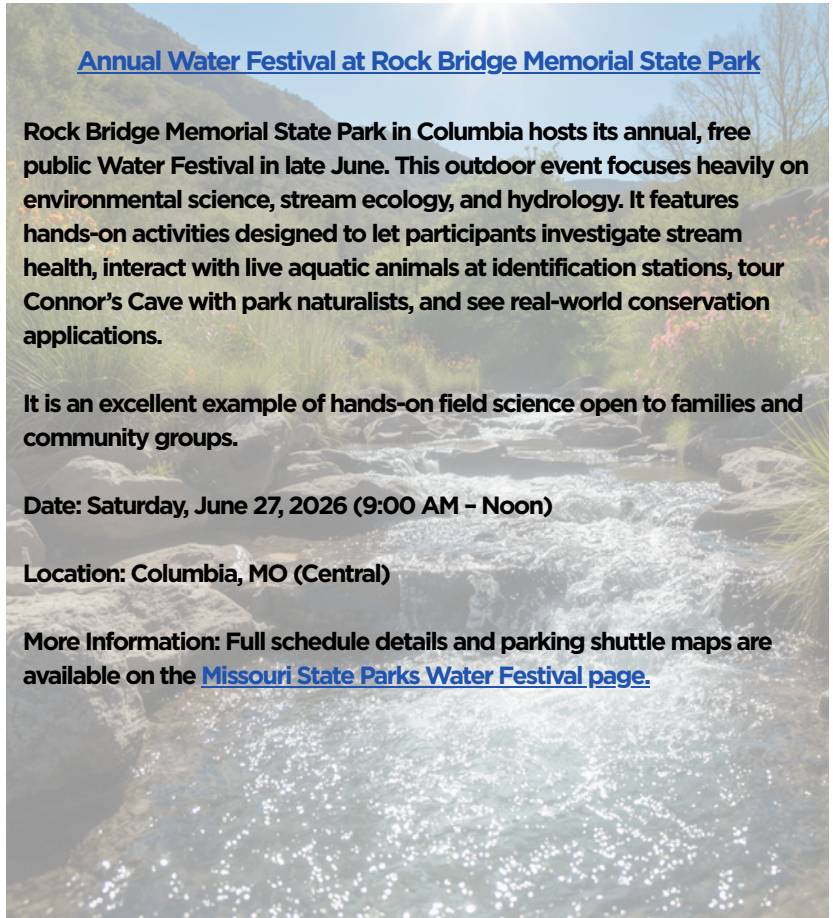
Rock Bridge Memorial State Park in Columbia hosts its annual, free public Water Festival in late June. This outdoor event focuses heavily on environmental science, stream ecology, and hydrology. It features hands-on activities designed to let participants investigate stream health, interact with live aquatic animals at identification stations, tour Connor's Cave with park naturalists, and see real-world conservation applications.

It is an excellent example of hands-on field science open to families and community groups.

Date: Saturday, June 27, 2026 (9:00 AM – Noon)

Location: Columbia, MO (Central)

More Information: Full schedule details and parking shuttle maps are available on the [Missouri State Parks Water Festival page](#).





5 Directions, 1 Mission

K-12 Entrepreneurs - Regional Resources

The Statewide "Safety Nets"

For girls in rural areas not near a major city, these two programs operate in every single county of Missouri:

Missouri 4-H (Starting a Business Project): 4-H isn't just for farming! Their "Entrepreneurship" project track allows any Missouri youth (ages 8-18) to work with a mentor to build a business plan and showcase their product at local and state fairs.

Missouri AfterSchool Network (MASN): They provide "Entrepreneurship Grants" to local K-12 afterschool programs across the state. Check with your local school's afterschool coordinator to see if they are currently running an MASN-funded business club!

St. Louis Metro (Eastern)

NFTE (Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship) St. Louis: A leader in the region for middle and high schoolers. They provide a high-octane "Startup Summer" and annual business plan competitions with cash prizes.

Girls Inc. of St. Louis: Their "Economic Literacy" program is a standout, teaching girls everything from the "basics of a buck" to high-level investment and business management.

Little Medical School / Little Business School: Headquartered in STL, they offer unique summer camps and afterschool programs focused specifically on the "business of healthcare" and entrepreneurship for younger students.

Southwest Missouri (Springfield/Joplin)

The efactory (Youth Initiatives): Based in Springfield at Missouri State, they serve as a tech and business hub. They host "Innovation Weeks" and partner with local schools to provide girls with access to mentors and "pitch practice."

Junior Achievement (JA) of Springfield: Known for their mobile "BizTown" and "Finance Park," which provide an immersive, day-long simulation where students run their own city and businesses.

Southeast Missouri (Cape Girardeau/Bootheel)
Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Missouri: They run the "Money Matters" and "CareerLaunch" programs, which include modules on starting a small business and identifying local market needs.

Zonta Club of Cape Girardeau: A professional organization that heavily supports the "Young Women in Public Affairs" award and provides scholarships and mentorship specifically for business-minded young women in the region.

Central Missouri (Columbia/Jefferson City)

Missouri Women's Business Center (MoWBC): While they primarily serve adults, they frequently host Youth Entrepreneurship Summits and partner with local 4-H clubs to mentor young girls starting their first ventures.

Stephens College (Stephens Star Ventures): One of the oldest women's colleges in the country, they often open their entrepreneurial labs and speaker series to local high school girls to inspire early leadership.

Kansas City Metro (Western)

Awesome Ambitions: Specifically serves girls in 8th-12th grade across Greater KC. They focus on college and career readiness with a heavy emphasis on entrepreneurial leadership for Black and Brown girls.

KC STEM Alliance: While STEM-focused, they host the Make It Real competition and other maker-to-market initiatives that help girls turn inventions into viable business prototypes.

AltCap (Youth Programs): Often partners with local KC schools to provide financial literacy and "micro-entrepreneurship" workshops for teens.



5 Directions, 1 Mission

MONorth, MOSouth, MOeast, MOWest, MOcentral

Beyond K-12:

Missouri's Powerhouse Pipeline for STEM Entrepreneurs

We love focusing on the K-12 foundation, but where do our students go when they're ready to change the world? From the Gateway City to the Ozarks, Missouri's universities are bridging the gap between "scientist" and "CEO."

Here is your guide to the top collegiate programs fostering the next generation of innovators across the Show-Me State.

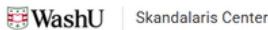


[Saint Louis University: The Master's of STEM Entrepreneurship](#)

SLU is proving that a lab coat and a business suit belong in the same wardrobe. Their new M.S. in STEM Entrepreneurship is tailored for graduates in chemistry, biology, and engineering.

The Hook: It's all about "commercialization." Students learn to transform lab discoveries into viable businesses in high-growth sectors like geospatial tech and ag-tech.

The Empowerment: This program shows young women they don't have to choose between being a researcher or a leader—they can be both.



[WashU: Where High-Tech Meets High-Stakes](#)

Washington University's Skandalaris Center is the engine behind some of the most exciting med-tech startups in the country.

SentiAR: Using Augmented Reality (AR) to guide doctors through complex heart surgeries.

GenAssist: Creating biotech "scaffolds" to help human muscles regrow after traumatic injuries.

The Takeaway: This is the perfect example of how coding and biology collide to solve real-world medical crises.



[Missouri State: The State's First STEM MBA](#)

MSU in Springfield has made history by launching the first STEM-designated MBA at a public university in Missouri.

The Blend: It's designed for students who want to master data analytics and cybersecurity while honing their leadership skills.

Student Spotlight: Meet Kamrunnahar Happy, a graduate researcher studying how AI can empower "solo-entrepreneurs" to manage their businesses more efficiently.



[Mizzou: The Return of the Entrepreneur](#)

The Trulaske College of Business recently welcomed home a true local legend. Kelsey Raymond, co-founder of the multi-million dollar firm Influence & Co., is now leading Mizzou's entrepreneurship programs.

The Connection: Her journey began when she sold painted rocks as a 5-year-old, right here in Missouri. Today, she mentors students in scaling Missouri-made ideas globally.

Pro-Tip for Your Students: Kelsey's #1 piece of advice? "Share your idea widely—don't keep it a secret!"



[Missouri S&T: Innovation in the Heart of the Ozarks](#)

In Rolla, the Kummer College of Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development is turning the "Central" region into a tech hub.

The "Ozark Foundry": A unique space where researchers and community members collaborate to turn novel technologies into actual ventures.

Opportunity: The Kummer Vanguard Scholarships are specifically designed to support STEM-minded students ready to disrupt the status quo.



[UMKC & The KC STEM Alliance: Closing the Gap](#)

In Kansas City, the KC STEM Alliance (managed through UMKC) is linking the legendary spirit of the Kauffman Foundation with programs like Project Lead The Way and FIRST Robotics.

The Mission: They are laser-focused on Closing the Gender Gap, ensuring that every girl in Kansas City can see a clear path from her first robot build to owning her own tech firm.



5 Directions, 1 Mission

MONorth, MOSouth, MOeast, MOWest, MOcentral



MOGirlsLEAD

Entrepreneurship

HERITAGE & FUTURE:
Women-Led Innovation in Missouri

THE PIONEERS (Past)	THE TRAILBLAZERS (Present)
<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Annie Malone (St. Louis) First Black female millionaire, founded Poro College, hair care pioneer, mentored Madam C.J. Walker.</p> </div> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Rose O'Neill (Taney County/ The Ozarks) Highest-paid female illustrator, created Kewpie, savvy businesswoman, funded suffrage movement.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Elizabeth McDaniel & Mary Herschend (Branson) Foundational "entrepreneurial spark" behind Silver Dollar City, visionary for Ozark crafts and tourism.</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Patricia Jo Boyers (Poplar Bluff) Co-founder & CEO BOYCOM Cablevision, Chairman ACA Connects, telecommunications powerhouse.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Tammy Buckner (Kansas City) Founder Techquity Digital, co-founder WeCode KC, tech training and mentoring youth, closing digital divide.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Joan Daleo (St. Louis) Led Ole Tyme Produce to largest women-owned fresh food distributor, high-tech logistics powerhouse.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <p>Katie Lee (St. Louis) Founder & CEO Katie's Pizza & Pasta, scaled to national brand, frozen pizzas in Target.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Wendy Doyle (Kansas City) President & CEO United WE, advocate for women-owned businesses, policy changes like "Appointments Project".</p> </div>

Resource Spotlight:



STEM



K-3rd Grade

The Most Magnificent Thing – Ashley Spires

4th–6th Grade

The Startup Squad – Brian Weisfeld and Nicole C. Kear

Teens (Middle / High School)

Girl Code: Gaming, Going Viral, and Getting It Done – Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser

Adults

Shark Tales: How I Turned \$1,000 into a Billion Dollar Business – Barbara Corcoran