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Connecticut Science Center Honors Maria Paris of Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School with the Petit Family Foundation's Women in Science Leadership Award

Norwalk, Conn. (July 9, 2026) - Norwalk Public Schools proudly congratulates Maria Paris, library media specialist at Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School, on being selected by the Connecticut Science Center as the 2026 recipient of the Petit Family Foundation's Women in Science Leadership Award.

Paris will be recognized at the Connecticut Science Center Gala: I Want My STEM-TV in October alongside other leaders who are advancing STEM education across the region through innovative work and mentorship.

The Women in Science Leadership Award honors a professional woman who demonstrates strong leadership in their STEM fields. Recipients are selected by the Women in Science Steering Committee for their commitment to advancing STEM through meaningful engagement with diverse audiences and for supporting and inspiring women and girls as students, educators, and professionals.

"Maria Paris consistently goes above and beyond to enrich our students' educational experiences," said Cesar Nina, principal of Jefferson Marine Science Elementary School.

As Jefferson's library media specialist and leader of the school's Gifted and Talented program, Paris has transformed STEM learning into a hands-on, schoolwide experience. She prepares students for STEAM competitions, organizes schoolwide STEAM events, leads the school's recycling and composting initiatives, and coordinates field-based learning experiences through partnerships with The Maritime Aquarium and Project Oceanology.

Paris also played a key role in establishing, expanding, and maintaining Jefferson's school garden, where students learn how to grow their own food while exploring concepts of



nutrition, sustainability, and environmental stewardship. Through these experiences, students develop scientific thinking and a deeper appreciation for the natural world

“Maria's passion, creativity, and tireless commitment have made a lasting impact on our school community. She creates opportunities that inspire curiosity, innovation, and environmental stewardship, and she truly deserves this recognition,” Nina said.

About Connecticut Science Center: Since opening its doors in 2009, the Connecticut Science Center has been on a mission to ignite curiosity, fuel innovation, and establish Connecticut as a hub for scientific discovery. Located in the heart of Hartford, it delivers hands-on, high-impact STEM experiences that inspire learners of all ages and abilities. With a bold vision for inclusion and excellence, the science center strives to shape future inventors, critical thinkers, and a workforce ready to lead in a fast-moving, tech-driven world.