

Girlstart Campers Explore Solutions to Sustain the Environment with Texas Disposal Systems

Since 1997, the Austin-based organization Girlstart has been empowering girls to find solutions to the world's most complex problems using STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math). Their innovative, quality education programs inspire girls to take risks and encourage curiosity to help them develop strong problem-solving skills. In addition to app development, robotics, video game development, and circuitry offerings, Girlstart has joined forces with Texas Disposal Systems (TDS) to integrate the company's Eco Academy curriculum into their week-long Summer Camp sessions*, called "Take it to the Streets."

TDS Eco Academy, a program that educates K-12 students about trash, recycling and composting options in Central Texas schools, was a natural addition to Girlstart Summer Camps as it encourages campers to think critically about waste diversion. Launched in 2017, Eco Academy was designed to minimize waste in schools, and includes campus-wide recycling, plus compostables collection in cafeterias. TDS provides curriculum and educational materials to staff and administrators, as well as students, instructing them how to recycle and divert waste, while teaching them why it is important.

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Similarly, Girlstart will teach camp participants how to divert waste by sorting compostable waste into the correct bin and build a composting bin for the organization's headquarters. Given the camp environment and the girls' affinity for helping the planet, teaching sustainability presents a great opportunity to open their minds to the STEM opportunities that exist within sustainability and resource management career fields. Additionally, campers will use recycled materials to complete various projects to increase sustainability efforts.

Girlstart, an organization that has served over 70,000 girls and 30,000 teachers and families with informal STEM programs, offers a wide range of lessons to help increase girls' competency in conducting scientific investigations and critical thinking. Girlstart After School offers free STEM education programs on a weekly basis to more than 2,700 4th and 5th grade girls to raise awareness about STEM careers. Much like Girlstart, TDS aims to educate students at a

young age to increase the likelihood they will develop problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Both Girlstart and Texas Disposal Systems have a shared goal to make a positive and lasting impact on the future through education and awareness, equipping students with the tools they need both in and outside the classroom. STEM education plays an integral role in sustaining our natural resources and environment for future generations, as well as teaching problem solving skills to help solve for challenges like waste diversion. Thanks to programs like Eco Academy and Girlstart, there is little doubt the investment in younger generations will make for a cleaner, better tomorrow.

**Camps are full at this time. Registration for 2019 opens in early January.*

