



IMPACT REPORT

2025

Breaking
New Ground
in Alabama

Welcoming Our
New President

Donor Spotlight:
Bob Sieck

Launching
STEM Futures
Across Africa





Challenger Learning Center
Mission Control

Dear Friends:

This past year has been one of transformation, momentum, and shared purpose at Challenger Center. It was also the first year of new leadership with our President and Executive Director, Mike Kincaid, at the helm. Mike's decades of experience in STEM education, leadership at NASA, and deep passion for inspiring the next generation have brought fresh energy and vision to our mission.

At Challenger Center, everything we do is grounded in creating immersive, hands-on STEM experiences that build students' skills, confidence, and excitement for the future. In 2024–2025, we saw that mission come to life in remarkable ways. We partnered with Carnegie Mellon University Africa to bring immersive virtual programming to students across Rwanda and beyond. We celebrated the full renovation of Challenger Learning Center of Maine, whose 20-year-old original simulator was uninstalled and replaced with our new design and technology. And we continued expanding access through our virtual programming, reaching students in rural communities, underserved schools, and even refugee camps.

These accomplishments were made possible by a network of educators, staff, partners, volunteers, and supporters who share our vision of fostering generations of innovative students who believe in unlimited possibilities for themselves, their careers, and our shared future. You are part of that network, and we are grateful for your support.

Looking ahead, the excitement only grows. In the coming year, we'll commemorate Challenger Center's 40th anniversary, a milestone that invites us to honor our history while boldly looking to the future. We will open a new Challenger Learning Center in Alabama, giving even more students the chance to step into the roles of engineers, scientists, and astronauts. And we will expand our reach with a fully translated Spanish version of Earth Odyssey.

We are proud of what we've accomplished together and even more inspired by what lies ahead. Thank you for your belief in our mission, your investment in our students, and your role in ensuring the next generation of explorers, innovators, and leaders can see themselves at the controls.

With gratitude,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Kincaid'.

Mike Kincaid
President and Executive Director



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'June Scobee Rodgers'.

June Scobee Rodgers, PhD
Founding Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Izenberg'.

Josh Izenberg
Chair, Board of Directors

Partnering to Strengthen STEM Education & Space Workforce

Through groundbreaking collaborations in research, technology, and workforce development, Challenger Center is reaching more students, delivering greater impact, and inspiring the future of the STEM workforce.

OVERDECK AND CHALLENGER CENTER: A SHARED COMMITMENT TO LASTING IMPACT

Overdeck Family Foundation has been a prominent partner in strengthening Challenger Center from the inside out. Beyond supporting our programs, Overdeck is dedicated to ensuring the organization behind those programs is sustainable, efficient, and equipped to thrive. Their support is strengthening the foundations of Challenger Center in a myriad of ways, from utilizing external expertise to strengthen our strategic plan, to engaging their network on messaging and fundraising best practices, and introducing regular staff surveys to maintain a healthy and high-performing work culture.



Together, we are advancing STEM education and building an organization ready for the next 40 years. Just as important, Overdeck has helped us foster a culture of data—supporting trainings, building better systems for collecting impact metrics, and ensuring we use evidence to drive innovation. With their expertise in education and their powerful network of thought leaders, they are constantly helping us unlock new opportunities to grow and improve. Thanks to their partnership, Challenger Center is not only delivering transformative STEM programs today but is also building the organizational strength needed to inspire students for decades to come.

MODERNIZING WITH AWS

Challenger Center received the 2024 Amazon Web Services (AWS) IMAGINE Grant, supporting our transition to cloud-based services for our STEM programs. This modernization will allow us to deliver software updates to Challenger Learning Centers faster and more equitably, improve cybersecurity, and expand our analytics capabilities. The award includes \$50,000 in unrestricted funding, AWS credits, and technical support, enabling us to keep pace with technology and improve the quality of student experiences nationwide.



“Our IMAGINE Grant winners are pioneering groundbreaking, technology-driven approaches that will amplify their mission impact and build a more equitable and compassionate world.”

Allyson Fryhoff, managing director of nonprofit and nonprofit health at AWS

ADVANCING RESEARCH WITH RAND

In partnership with the RAND Corporation and with major funding from Overdeck Family Foundation, Challenger Center launched a randomized controlled trial to measure the impact of our simulated space Missions on middle school students. This rigorous study will track outcomes such as science self-efficacy, STEM career interest, and course selection over time. It will also provide essential lessons on how experiential learning can inspire students. We look forward to sharing the results with you in 2026.



INSPIRING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE WITH SWFT

Through a new partnership with Space Workforce for Tomorrow (SWFT)—a coalition of leading space companies—Challenger Center became SWFT’s inaugural “Implementation Partner,” connecting directly with students in programs that spark curiosity about space careers.



“Our partnership with Challenger Center marks a significant step forward in motivating the next generation of space professionals. Together, we are transforming lives, creating opportunities, and building the foundation for a capable and inclusive workforce.”

Melanie Stricklan, SWFT Executive Director

These partnerships reflect a core truth:

**When innovative nonprofits,
visionary funders, and
industry leaders unite,
the impact is exponential.**

Thanks to your support, Challenger Center continues to inspire young minds, strengthen STEM pathways, and prepare tomorrow’s workforce for the opportunities that lie ahead.

Reaching More Students

During the 2024-2025 school year,
our **33 Challenger Learning Centers** reached

220,000 students
with programming.



This included more than

86,000 students
taking part in one of our space-themed
Center-based or Virtual Missions.



In total, we reached students from

34 different states
across the nation.

Would you like to change lives by sponsoring student missions?

Contact us at giving@challenger.org to learn more
about this powerful way to make a difference.

Alumni Testimonials



JESSICA GRAPENTINE

Biomedical Flight Controller, NASA Johnson Space Center
Alum of Buehler Challenger & Science Center in Paramus, NJ

“Volunteering at Buehler Challenger & Science Center’s summer camp helped me discover that I loved mission operations. It helped me choose where I wanted my career to go in the space industry! ...My time there helped me realize my passion for space. It was a crucial step in my pursuit of this passion as a full-time career.”



ADAM WUERL

Principal Aerospace Systems Engineer, Blue Origin
Alum of Challenger Learning Center at the Museum of Flight in Seattle, WA

“My visit to a Challenger Learning Center was one of my first exposures of how space was a thing that real people worked on. It wasn’t just for movies and sci-fi novels, or the occasional news coverage of a Space Shuttle mission. My experience there...bridged the gap between a subject I’d always been interested in and realizing it was a thing I could do for a living.”



KENNETH HARRIS

Senior Project Manager, The Aerospace Corporation
Alum of Howard B. Owens Science Center in Lanham, MD

“In STEM, it is critical for students to see subjects they’re learning in the classroom in action. The Challenger Learning Center supplies these experiences for eager students to see the tangibility of their classroom lessons.”



ALEXIS CRYTS

Aerospace Engineer
Alum of Challenger Learning Center at Paducah, KY

“Experiences like those at Challenger Center are so important for students because they show how exciting STEM can be. Centers provide immersive, hands-on learning opportunities that spark curiosity and encourage exploration in high-demand STEM fields. For many students, this offers valuable insight into the vast world of STEM that they might not have had the chance to discover otherwise.”

Leadership and Progress

WELCOMING OUR NEW PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In January 2025, we welcomed Mike Kincaid as Challenger Center's new President and Executive Director. A lifelong STEM education champion, Kincaid brought over 37 years of leadership experience from NASA, where he most recently served as Associate Administrator for the Office of STEM Engagement. His deep expertise in national STEM initiatives, combined with his passion for inspiring the next generation, makes him an ideal leader to guide Challenger Center into its next phase of growth.



“As I considered opportunities for my post-NASA life, I wanted a role that would inspire students across the country, using the excitement of space to help shape the STEM workforce of the future. Challenger Center feels like the perfect fit.”

Mike Kincaid, President and Executive Director

STRENGTHENING OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In 2024, we also welcomed three exceptional leaders to our Board of Directors. Each brings unparalleled experience, from piloting NASA missions to expanding access to higher education, to growing community-based STEM programs.



Wendy Lawrence

Former NASA Astronaut
(Captain, US Navy, Retired)



Dr. Victoria L. Bastecki-Perez

President of Montgomery
County Community College
in Pennsylvania



Kirsten Hibbard

Executive Director of Challenger
Learning Center of Maine

These women bring insights and leadership that will help us expand our reach, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that Challenger Center remains a leader in delivering hands-on, high-impact STEM experiences for students nationwide.

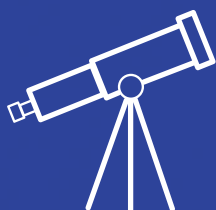
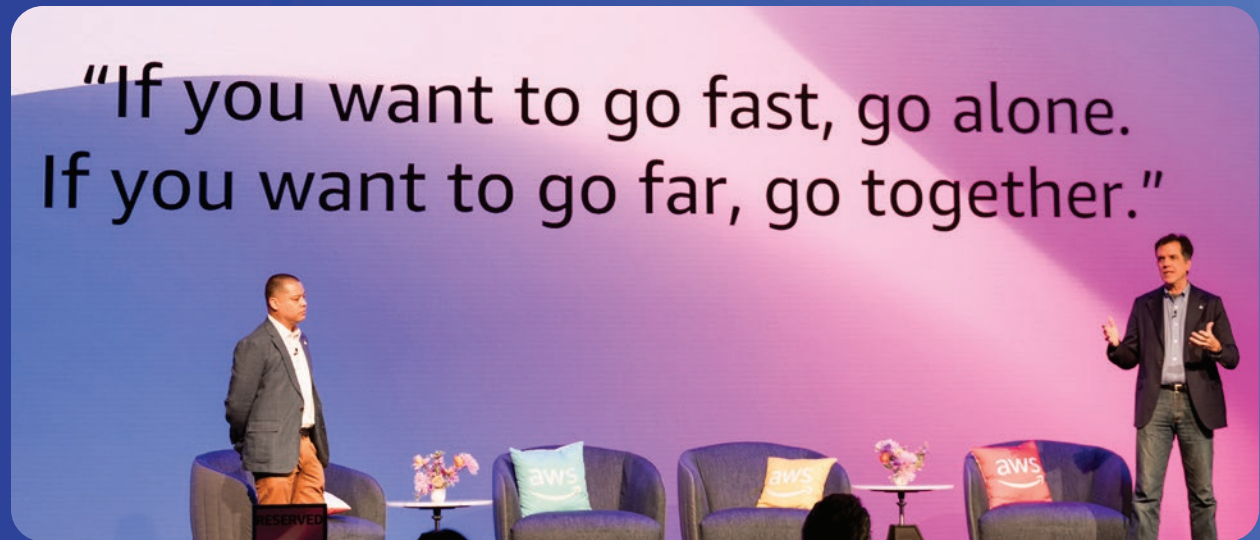
SHARING OUR VISION AT AWS IMAGINE FOR NONPROFITS

In March 2025, Challenger Center was invited to present at AWS Imagine for Nonprofits, a national gathering of mission-driven leaders and technology experts working to advance social impact. Mike Kincaid and Michael Cruz, our Vice President of Technology and Enterprise Operations, delivered a talk titled “Inspiring the Next Generation of Space Explorers: Data-Driven Strategies and Impact in STEM Education.”

The presentation showcased Challenger Center’s digital transformation—from creating real-time impact dashboards to transitioning our program delivery to a modern, cloud-based system that ensures all Challenger Learning Centers receive the latest updates seamlessly. The work, made possible through partnerships with AWS, Keyrus, CDW, and Overdeck Family Foundation, drew praise from attendees and sparked new connections with fellow innovators in the nonprofit sector.



“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”



LOOKING AHEAD

Challenger Center is committed to continuous progress. Our strengthened leadership reflects the strength of our community—the partners, staff, and donors who share our belief that every student deserves the chance to be inspired by the possibilities of STEM.

Launching STEM Futures Across Africa

Working with local partners to help motivate young African students to pursue higher education and careers in STEM

Challenger Center is partnering with Carnegie Mellon University Africa (CMU-Africa) in Kigali, Rwanda, to bring its Virtual Missions to hundreds of secondary school students across the continent. These space-themed experiences—Destination Mars, Destination Moon, and Observation Earth—immerse students in real-world STEM concepts, from space exploration to medicine and environmental conservation.

Designed to boost STEM engagement, identity, and career awareness while building teamwork and problem-solving skills, the Missions will first reach students in Rwanda, with plans to expand across Africa. The program emphasizes inclusion, reaching underserved communities and even schools in refugee camps.

“We hope to get secondary school students excited about the field of STEM and educate them on how they can use these skills to make an impact in their communities and across the continent.”

Conrad Tucker, director of CMU-Africa



Arthur C. Clarke Awardee

Challenger Center awarded the 2024 Arthur C. Clarke Award for Innovation in Education to Challenger Learning Center of Dayton for their collaboration with high school senior Alex Pettit on an interactive aerospace timeline in their main hallway.



Josh Izenberg, Marisa Wojtaszek, June Scobee Rodgers, Avril Gedman, Dorothy Metcalf-Lindenburger

Pettit proposed the project to earn her Girl Scouts Gold Award, transforming the 60-foot-long, 18-meter-high space into a spacecraft-like corridor showcasing aerospace history. With support from staff and 25 volunteers, over 300 hours went into creating hand-drawn images, 3D models, and a tribute to the Challenger STS-51L Crew.



“This unique project now allows the Center staff to discuss important events in aerospace history with our 3rd grade students who visit our Center, and helps further immerse these students in their Challenger experience.”

Avril Gedman, Director of Challenger Learning Center of Dayton

June Scobee Rodgers Educator Awardee

Gina Pereda, an eighth-grade integrated science teacher at STEAM Academy Middle School in Hazelwood, MO, is the recipient of the 2024 June Scobee Rodgers Educator Award.

The Award is named in honor of our Founding Chair, Dr. June Scobee Rodgers. It recognizes an outstanding educator who demonstrates enthusiasm and passion for teaching STEM subjects. Pereda was nominated by Challenger Learning Center – St. Louis. In over 20 years of teaching middle school science, Pereda has brought dozens of groups of students to the Center to fly Missions.



Staff from Challenger Learning Center - St. Louis and faculty from STEAM Academy Middle School present Gina Pereda with her award.



CHALLENGER CENTER

June Scobee Rodgers Educator Award

FOR STEM ENTHUSIASM AND PASSION

“Learning about passionate educators like Gina is a reminder of the unwavering dedication teachers have to both their students and their craft. It’s truly a privilege to recognize outstanding educators and celebrate a culture of excellence in teaching that transforms lives and shapes the future.”

June Scobee Rodgers

Endowing the June Scobee Rodgers Educator Award

Over the past eight years, this award has been a meaningful tribute to exceptional educators and the legacy of Dr. June Scobee Rodgers. In recognition of the importance of this work, Challenger Center has been fundraising to endow the award permanently so it can continue to inspire and support teachers for generations to come.

At our annual conference in August 2025, Mike Kincaid surprised Scobee Rodgers with an announcement of having raised over \$40,000 towards the endowment. With gifts from long-time friends, current members of the Challenger Center network, partners, and other supporters, we are ensuring that we are honoring the teachers and STEM leaders instrumental in fostering the future.

“I think about my teaching days when I wanted to do something innovative for my students but didn’t have the money. It’s my honor to have my name attached to an award that provides support to help bring those innovative ideas to life.”

June Scobee Rodgers





Challenger Learning Center
Spacecraft

Trailblazing STEM Educator Awardees

Challenger Center and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) announced Kelsy Achtenberg, Allan Miller, and Kevin L. Simmons as the winners of the 2025 Trailblazing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Educator Award.



Each teacher and their respective schools is awarded \$5,000. Additionally, each teacher receives free access to Challenger Center STEM programming, a trip to Washington, D.C. to be honored at the 2025 AIAA Awards Gala, and an invitation to attend a future space launch experience and VIP tour.

The annual award celebrates K-12 educators who go above and beyond to inspire the next generation of explorers and innovators in science, technology, education, and math. These incredible teachers work every day to empower underserved and underrepresented students in STEM while using

unique strategies, tools, and lessons in and out of the classroom to further energize students. From leading teacher training programs on STEM across Asia, to building student-led programs on cutting-edge SmallSat technology, to improving STEM accessibility for students with dyslexia, each of the 2025 awardees works tirelessly to inspire the next generation of explorers.

THE 2025 TRAILBLAZING STEM EDUCATOR AWARD RECIPIENTS



Kelsy Achtenberg

STEM coordinator, math lead, and Dean of Students at The Innovation School (Bismarck, ND)



Allan Miller

Applied STEM and Design Technology teacher at Williston Central School (Williston, VT)



Kevin L. Simmons

Founder of the Wolfpack CubeSat Development Team (WCDT) and Aerospace and Innovation Academy (Palm Beach Gardens, FL)

Network Growth

BREAKING NEW GROUND IN ALABAMA

On September 17, 2024, Challenger Center celebrated the groundbreaking of the future Challenger Learning Center of Northeast Alabama, marking an expansion of our network and ability to inspire more students through hands-on STEM learning.

Hundreds attended the event, including state leaders, educators, business owners, and students. Governor Kay Ivey emphasized the Center's statewide impact:

“Success in one part of the state lifts up the rest of the state. This is a good thing for Northeast Alabama, but it’s a great thing for the state of Alabama.”

Alabama Governor Kay Ivey

Opening in early 2026 in Rainbow City, the Center will serve students from more than a dozen counties. Its immersive simulation-based programs will help students build critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills while sparking curiosity about STEM careers. Local leaders also see the Center as an investment in preparing the future workforce.



Dr. June Scobee Rodgers shared her Alabama roots and encouraged students to dream big.

“One of you will be the age to take that step, to be the first person on Mars.”

Dr. June Scobee Rodgers

With the dedication of the Advisory Council and the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama, and broad community support, the Center is on track to become a transformative resource for students and a driver of opportunity across the region.



Photos from the groundbreaking ceremony in Rainbow City, AL on Sept 17, 2024.

CELEBRATING THE RELAUNCH OF OUR MAINE CENTER

In June 2025, Challenger Learning Center of Maine celebrated the grand reopening of its fully renovated facility in Bangor, marking its first major upgrade in more than 20 years.



Backed by a \$2.2 million Congressionally directed spending award and over \$876,000 in local contributions, the Center has transformed every element of its learning environment—from Mission Control to the Spacecraft and Transport Room—creating a more immersive experience than ever before.

The celebration brought together donors, volunteers, local leaders, and community members, who toured the upgraded simulator and joined a Mission. Executive Director Kirsten Hibbard and her dedicated team welcomed guests to see firsthand the results of years of planning and collaboration.

With the renovations complete, the Center is equipped with state-of-the-art technology to run Challenger Center's latest simulations, preparing Maine students for the next 20 years of discovery. As students step into the roles of Mission Controllers and astronauts, they build teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills—the same values that made this transformation possible.

Challenger Learning Center, Maine
Transport Room

2024 Partners & Donors



We are grateful to our government, corporate, and foundation partners, as well as all the individuals who contributed in 2024. These organizations and people support us in many ways, including monetary gifts and in-kind contributions of their expertise and resources.

Your support enabled us to ignite the potential in students in 2024 and will help us inspire millions more in future years.

THANK YOU.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: BOB SIECK



From the Gemini Spacecraft program in 1964 to serving as NASA's Launch Director for 52 Space Shuttle missions, Bob Sieck spent over three decades ensuring astronauts safely began their journeys into space. "I was fortunate to be a part of a great adventure," Bob reflects. But for him, the mission never truly ended.

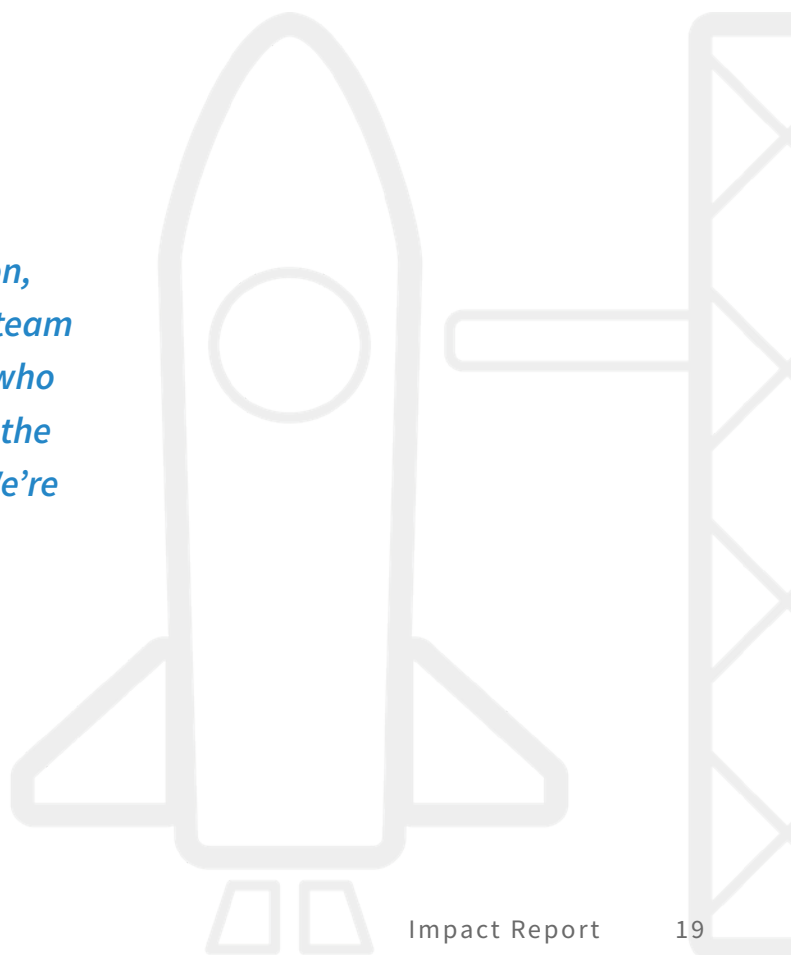
Earlier this year, Bob transformed a lifetime of spaceflight history into a gift for the future. For decades, he collected signed astronaut lithographs, mission artifacts, and other pieces that told the story of exploration. He didn't view these items as souvenirs, but as reminders of the teamwork, precision, and shared purpose that define spaceflight.

When the time came to part with some of his collection, Bob auctioned the items and donated the proceeds—\$6,000—to Challenger Center. "Instead of leaving it on a shelf, let's put it to use," he said.

That belief in a shared mission mirrors Challenger Center's own purpose: to inspire the next generation of explorers, innovators, and problem-solvers. Bob's gift will help bring hands-on space education to thousands of students, ensuring that the spark of curiosity he once helped launch in astronauts will ignite in the leaders of tomorrow.

For Bob, the choice to donate was about legacy.

"The astronauts are part of the mission, but they're just as much a part of the team as an engineer like I was or someone who builds a rocket. Without your work on the team, we don't get to go into space. We're on the same mission."



Financials

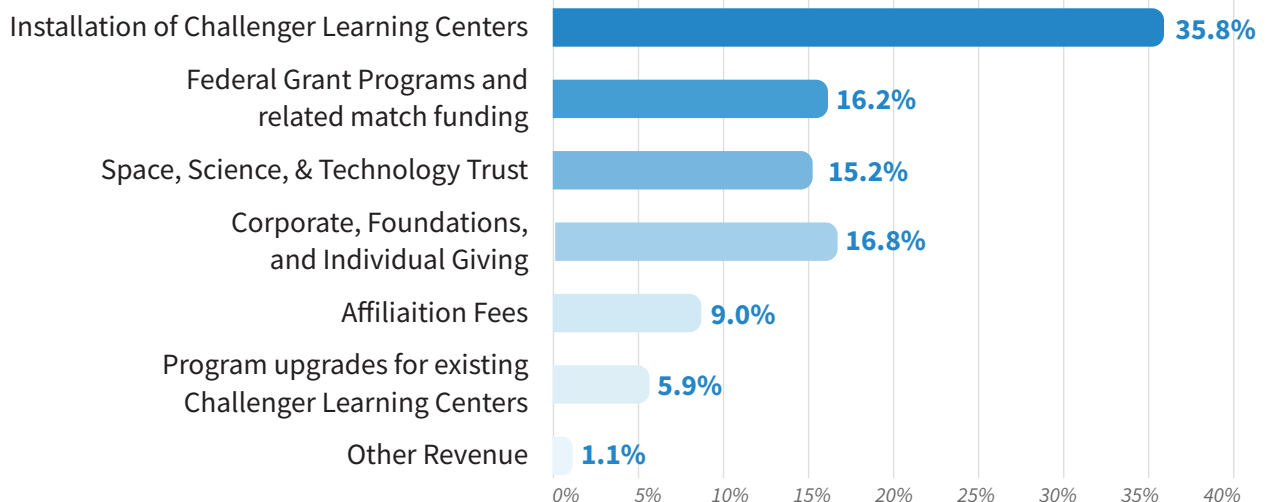
In 2024, Challenger Center's revenue was **\$6.5 million**.

88%

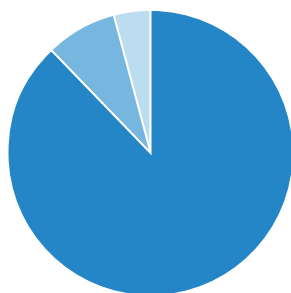
of our revenue went directly to developing and delivering our immersive STEM education programs around the globe.

This includes the installation of new Mission Control simulators at Challenger Learning Centers in Hammond, In and Paducah, KY, and the start of a complete renovation of Challenger Learning Center of Maine's 20-year-old simulator. It also includes technology infrastructure upgrades in Paramus, NJ, Kapolei, HI, and San Antonio, TX and the development of a new virtual program, Observation Earth.

REVENUE SOURCES

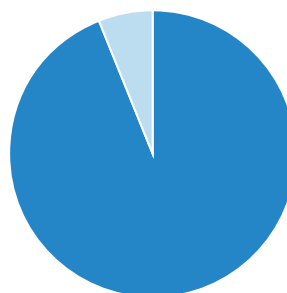


EXPENSES



- Education Programs **88%**
- Fundraising **8%**
- Management and Administration* **4%**

EDUCATION PROGRAM EXPENSES



- Program Development and Network Support **94%**
- Communications **6%**

**When calculating the amount of Challenger Center income spent on Management and Administration, we exclude Depreciation and write-offs of Bad Debt. Neither of those expenses reflect real expenditure of donated funds on management and administration costs. In fact, they demonstrate Challenger Center's commitment to responsible fiscal management.*

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the Year Ended December 31, 2024

Challenger Center for Space Science Education

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Operating Revenue and Support			
Science, Space, and Technology Education Trust Fund	\$ 1,000,000	-	1,000,000
Learning centers installation	2,351,826	-	2,351,826
Federal grants and agreements	1,061,634	-	1,061,634
Non-federal grants	892,785	-	892,785
License fees	592,727	-	592,727
Contributions and sponsorships	191,678	54,596	246,274
In-kind contributions	22,850	-	22,850
Consulting	388,304	-	388,304
Registration	18,200	-	18,200
Other revenue	23,478	-	23,478
Released from restrictions	29,031	(29,031)	-
Total operating revenue and support	6,572,513	25,565	6,598,078
Expenses			
Program services:			
Federal grants and other education programs	1,567,519	-	1,567,519
Network support	3,969,119	-	3,969,119
Communications	330,397	-	330,397
Total program services	5,867,035	-	5,867,035
Supporting services:			
Management and general	250,692	-	250,692
Development	551,287	-	551,287
Total supporting services	801,979	-	801,979
Total expenses	6,669,014	-	6,669,014
Change in Net Assets from Operations	(96,501)	25,565	(70,936)
Non-Operating Activity Investment return	(16,686)	117,035	100,349
Change in Net Assets	(113,187)	142,600	29,413
Net Assets, beginning of year	(188,185)	624,891	436,706
Net (Deficit) Assets, end of year	(301,372)	767,491	466,119

See accompanying notes.

