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FEATURED

Crowder is “A Girl of the Future”

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Sophie Crowder of South Hill

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has named South Hill’s own, Sophie Crowder, 16, “A Girl of the Future”.

“Girls of The Future” is a competitive selection recognizing the most outstanding young girls throughout the United States who are advancing the future through STEM.

Crowder was honored for her accomplishments in STEM, especially with her Curie Box project and achievements in aerospace science. She will be part of their national campaign online and offline.

“A Girl of the Future is a girl who looks to the future with hope and aspirations- confident that she has what it takes on challenges and obstacles, resilient in the face of failure, and determined to empower others to tap into their potential knowing well that it takes more than herself to make the world a better place,” said Crowder.

Sophie says that she is passionate about STEM because it shapes our future and that it is important to the world because it “encompasses all the known and unknowns- it’s in everything we do”.

Sophie is a junior at Kenston Forest School and is taking dual enrollment courses towards her Associate’s Degree in Science at Southside Virginia Community College. She participates in programs such as the 4H Teen Excellence in Leadership Institute; Future Leaders in Algorithm, Mathematics, and Engineering Camp with the Society of American Military Engineers, and this year, she was selected as a Virginia Space Coast Scholar by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium. She hopes to be an innovator for the space program, with plans to study Engineering Physics for her bachelor’s degree.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Crowder was inspired by her NASA SpaceApps Hackathon experiences of applying space science to find solutions for real-life challenges which led her to design and create a sanitation device out of a bread box using UV radiation, to help address the shortage of cleaning and PPE supplies as well as prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus within her community. She called her project, the Curie Box, in honor of one of her science heroes, Marie Curie, who pioneered radiation studies. With the help of SVCC, family, and friends, Sophie is able to make Curie Boxes for area schools, library, rescue squads, and other public facilities in her community. She hopes to conduct future workshops to empower other youth, especially girls (through her initiative, IT girls), to use their STEM knowledge and skills in building Curie Boxes for their communities.

Sophie aspires to inspire the next generation of STEMists., Innovators, and Space Explorers. She is an advocate for gender equity and as an 8th grader, founded an initiative (ItGirls) to help empower other youth girls to pursue non-traditional career pathways such as those in IT and STEM. She is an active participant in speaking to a wide range of audiences from all over the

world in webinars and online programs, and as a TedEd speaker. She also initiated a mentoring program in her community by leading STEMsquad, an educational program where kids K-8 collaborate in conducting fun Science experiments. Sophie serves in the Advisory Board of Etre Girls and in the IfThenSheCan Girls Advisory Council.

In 2019, Sophie was part of a team whose STEM experiment with Higher Orbits mission design team that won a student membership to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics for their proposed experiment on tardigrade research. Aside from being a spokesperson for STEM and girl-empowerment, she is also a talented musician; multi-awarded essayist, earning national merits in the Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy competitions; as well as a Teen Correspondent/ Author at Worth Magazine; she is also a roboticist and coder; as well as a pilot and scuba diver in training.

For any young girl interested in science or STEM, Sophie says, "You've got what it takes. Do not ever let anyone talk you out of believing in yourself."