October 2010
College of William and Mary
Applied Research Center Student Newsletter

Song Vick (front row center) at Astronomy Camp.

A Different Kind of View

Song Vick left William and Mary's Surface Characterization Lab microscopes behind and spent the weekend gazing through University of Arizona telescopes on Mt. Lemmon, near Tucson. Song was selected to attend Astronomy Camp as a representative of the Girl Scout Council of the Colonial Coast.

Twice a year, the University of Arizona hosts a camp program uniquely designed for training Girl Scout leaders to inspire girls to explore science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The program is sponsored by NASA through the Near Infrared Camera (NIRCam) instrument program of the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). All expenses for the trip were paid for by NASA which included airfare to Tucson, and lodging and meals on Mt. Lemmon.

The program was lead by University of Arizona professor and Astronomy Camp Director Dr. Don McCarthy. Along with Dr. McCarthy, four graduate students, a retired professor and representatives from the Sahuara Girl Scout Council provided classroom lectures, hands-on activities, star gazing guidance and instructions for using telescopes ranging in size from 10 inches to 60 inches.

The camp began with a tour of the Steward Observatory Mirror Lab under the University of Arizona football stadium where large glass telescope mirrors are fabricated. After a two hour journey to the top of Mt. Lemmon at an elevation of over 9,000 feet, 14 participants from all over the country spent the weekend immersed in all things astronomy from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm. Highlights of the weekend included using a laser pointer to map the constellations, breath taking views of Jupiter through a 60-inch telescope and background information on the NIRCam as developed by the University of Arizona and the JWST which will be launched in 2014. Participants were also exposed to awesome views of the Milky Way Galaxy and beautiful sunrises and sunsets.