

Women in Defense Space Coast to host its annual Sandbagger Invitational Golf Tournament at Baytree National, funds STEM scholarships for students

By Ken Datzman

The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter, part of the Arlington, Virginia-based National Defense Industrial Association, is one of the area's up-and-coming organizations.

The NDIA drives strategic dialogue in national security by identifying key issues and leveraging the knowledge and experience of its military, government, industry, and academic members to address them.

The local chapter was founded Jan. 21, 2013, and has worked to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education for girls on the Space Coast.

"We are gaining more visibility in the community and in January celebrated our 11th anniversary as an organization," said Elizabeth Huy, president of the Space Coast Chapter.

"We are one of 20 Women in Defense chapters nationally. The Space Coast Chapter has focused on elevating opportunities for women working in national defense, including networking opportunities and professional development. A big passion for our chapter's members has been the STEM scholarship program and raising funds to enable the next generation of women to study post-secondary STEM fields and help fill the talent pipeline."

Huy, who has a bachelor's degree in finance and marketing from Florida State University, is executive vice president of commercial services at Alluvionic Inc. in Melbourne.

She oversees the company's cybersecurity services' team, project management team, and process improvement initiatives.

The fast-growing firm, started in 2013 by businesswoman Wendy Romeu, recently moved into a new 5,000-square-foot office. The company also has an office in Washington, D.C.

The WID Space Coast Chapter will be hosting its seventh annual Sandbagger Invitational Golf Tournament Friday, May 10, at Baytree National Golf Links in Melbourne.

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m., with tee off at 8 a.m. The player registration fee is \$95. To register for the Sandbagger Invitational, visit WIDSC.org/golf.

The tournament is still accepting golfers and there are a range of sponsorship opportunities for businesses, organizations, and individuals. Visit the website to learn about sponsorships.

"This event presents a good opportunity for businesses to show their support for a nonprofit organization that is doing a lot of great things in the community, including raising money for STEM scholarships," said Huy.

The event is open to men and women golfers. The registration fee includes a cart, driving range time, a continental breakfast, and lunch. There will be various fun competitions, including closest to the pin and longest drive.

"The golf tournament is our biggest fundraiser of the year and it helps fund the chapter's STEM scholarships," said Catherine Wright, WID Space Coast Chapter secretary.

"It's always a fun day. Over the years, we have raised and awarded more than \$76,000 in STEM scholarships because of the success of the Sandbagger Invitational."

Since its inception, WID Space Coast has awarded scholarships and contributed to STEM-related events in



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

The Women in Defense Space Coast Chapter will host its seventh annual Sandbagger Invitational Golf Tournament May 10 at Baytree National Golf Links in Melbourne. This is the organization's major fundraiser of the year and supports STEM scholarships for Brevard County women seeking to further their education in science, technology, engineering, and math studies. From left, the WID Space Coast team includes: Indigo Strategic Consulting's Catherine Wright, chapter secretary; Alluvionic Inc.'s Elizabeth Huy, chapter president; and Atrax Technologies' Sirena Ozzello, chapter vice president. They are at Alluvionic in Melbourne.

partnership with local businesses, nonprofits, and federal agencies such as Patrick Space Force Base.

Companies are invited to make a tax-free donation in any amount to the WID Space Coast STEM Scholarship Fund. Visit the website for details.

To learn more about sponsoring a WID Space Coast STEM scholarship, email Sponsorships@WIDSC.org.

WID Space Coast STEM scholarship awards vary up to \$1,000 for Brevard County women seeking to further their education in STEM studies, with an interest in pursuing a career that supports the national defense industrial base.

Awards are based on academic achievement, field of study, work experience, statements of interest, recommendations, and financial need.

Researchers say building up a girl's confidence early is one of the main ways to help girls succeed in STEM education. Exposure to STEM education should remain

consistent throughout elementary, middle, and high school.

WID Space Coast will soon be awarding its latest round of STEM scholarships.

"The application deadline has just closed for this year, but candidates interested in the next cycle can learn more about the STEM scholarship process by visiting the chapter's website (WIDSC.org). The information is under the event tab," said Wright, the founder and CEO of area firm Indigo Strategic Consulting.

Her company provides strategic marketing and communication services to "companies and organizations facing significant transformation."

Wright has more than two decades of professional experience. After graduating with her bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from Georgia Institute of

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Technology, she was recruited by Harris Corp., now L3Harris Technologies.

“I moved here from Atlanta and worked for Harris for 25 years,” said Wright, who also has an MBA degree from the University of Florida. “I spent the first half of my career designing structures for space, and then pivoted into the business side. I had various roles, including in business development and strategy, as well as in marketing and communications.”

Wright has also completed the executive education programs at two of the nation’s top business schools — University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business and University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business.

With her consulting firm, Wright’s work centers on “problem-solving for businesses.”

Wright became a member of WID Space Coast 18 months ago. “I was looking to become more involved in the community and meet other professional women. I run my own business and I think it’s important to connect with others, not just my customers. I want to be part of the bigger community and WID Space Coast provides a great platform to do that.”

Membership to the organization is open to both men and women. “Although we are focused on elevating opportunities for women, the organization is supported by a lot of men,” said Sirena Ozzello, WID Space Coast Chapter vice president.

“We really appreciate that support. We have men members who participate in our events and a lot of them will be on the Baytree National course May 10.”

“We are certainly looking to help all individuals connect and grow through professional development,” added Huy. “Our mission is to make sure we are creating those opportunities.”

“I think WID Space Coast is doing an amazing job,” said Ozzello.

Ozzello is a local businessowner. In 2020, she founded Atrax Technologies. Her firm started off offering consulting and bookkeeping services for small businesses.

“I’m now transitioning into government contracting for the construction industry,” said Ozzello, who has a bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of Central Florida.

She previously worked for 8-koi Inc., a Melbourne-based government contracting business founded by Inga Young, a past president of the WID Space Coast Chapter and longtime member of the organization.

“Inga is one of my mentors,” said Ozzello. “Because of her, I became involved with WID Space Coast. By being a part of WID Space Coast, it has given me the opportunity to expand my networking contacts, which is important to me.”

WID’s Space Coast Chapter includes engineers, scientists, businessowners, accountants, real estate professionals, lawyers, and bankers.

Members have access to a broad and professionally diverse network that can provide advice and communication to people in all phases of career development and transition.

And there are opportunities to coach and mentor the next generation of defense professionals, creating the critical diversity that will strengthen the nation’s competitive advantage.

Throughout the year, the WID Space Coast Chapter recognizes individuals and organizations that go “above and beyond” in their support of STEM education in the community.

Part of WID Space Coast Chapter’s core mission is to recognize those who contribute their time, effort, and resources to support educational partnerships on the

Space Coast and propel women in careers.

While nominations have closed for this year, the recognition categories are:

- **STEM Leadership Star of the Year:** This person supports and promotes STEM in an ongoing effort throughout the community in innovative ways.

- **STEM Educator of the Year:** This is an individual who increases opportunities for students and teachers to expand their knowledge and appreciation of STEM-related curriculum, projects, or career paths.

- **STEM Mentor of the Year:** This person dedicates time to growing the next generation of STEM professionals through one-on-one or group activities. For example, this could be an adult or student volunteering to support or create a STEM-related club or activity.

“These are the three categories in which we recognize people on an annual basis,” said Wright. “These typically are individuals who are doing great things to help grow STEM awareness in the community. We honor them at an event. It’s inspiring.”

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PRESENT




The 7th Annual

SANDBAGGER INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

HELP US MAKE OUR SEVENTH GOLF TOURNAMENT A SUCCESS!
ALL PROCEEDS FROM THIS EVENT WILL SUPPORT STEM ACTIVITIES
IN OUR SPACE COAST FLORIDA COMMUNITY.

**FRIDAY
MAY 10**
7:30AM REGISTRATION
8AM TEE TIME

BAYTREE NATIONAL
8207 NATIONAL DR
MELBOURNE, FL 32940

\$85/PLAYER REGISTRATION
(\$95/PLAYER AFTER APRIL 15TH)
REGISTRATION INCLUDES GREENS FEES, CART, DRIVING RANGE AND LUNCH
CLOSEST TO THE PIN (MALE & FEMALE) • LONGEST DRIVE (MALE & FEMALE)
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OR VISIT WIDSC.ORG/GOLF



PROCEEDS FROM PREVIOUS TOURNAMENTS HAVE HELPED RAISE OVER \$76,000 FOR SCHOLARSHIPS AND STEM RELATED PROGRAMS.
WOMEN IN DEFENSE SPACE COAST IS A VOLUNTEER, 501C3, NOT-FOR-PROFIT, ORGANIZATION. MORE INFO AT [HTTP://WIDSC.ORG/GOLF](http://WIDSC.ORG/GOLF)