

SOPHIE DE SAINT GEORGES & SUE ANN HEATHERLY, Education and Public Outreach, Green Bank Observatory, Green Bank, WV, 24944. The West Virginia Science Public Outreach Team: Impacts of an Undergraduate STEM Outreach Program

The WV Science Public Outreach Team is an undergraduate outreach program in WV. The primary goal of SPOT is to inspire K-12 students to consider STEM careers through engaging activities and presentations delivered by undergraduate students. All SPOT presentations feature research going on in the Mountain State. To ensure accessibility for rural, under-served, and underrepresented populations, SPOT offers all programming at little to no cost and provides materials for hands-on activities and AV equipment for presentations. By route of exposure to college role models, K-12 students begin to visualize themselves as future scientists and engineers while increasing their level of engagement in STEM education and new STEM topics. An equally compelling outcome is the professional development of the SPOT Ambassadors themselves. Through training, practice and implementation in K-12 classrooms, SPOT ambassadors gain valuable experience communicating complex science concepts to diverse audiences and develop confidence in public speaking. Through training and networking with STEM professionals, ambassadors gain access to STEM career opportunities. In this session we will explore the impact WV SPOT has on the professional development of STEM undergraduate students.