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SALLY RIDE SCIENCE

Tritons for Sally Ride Science hosts Carlsbad robotics teams for inspiring event



(<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Kelly-cropped.jpeg>)

November 4, 2018 (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/tritons-for-sally-ride-science-hosts-carlsbad-robotics-teams-for-inspiring-event/>) by Sally Ride Science (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/author/mking/>) · Posted in " News

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Science teacher Nicole Buchanan helped create a robust robotics program at [Kelly Elementary School](https://kelly.schoolloop.com/) (https://kelly.schoolloop.com/) in Carlsbad. But when the school's robotics teams began working on projects for a space-based LEGO competition, she thought she could use a little help.

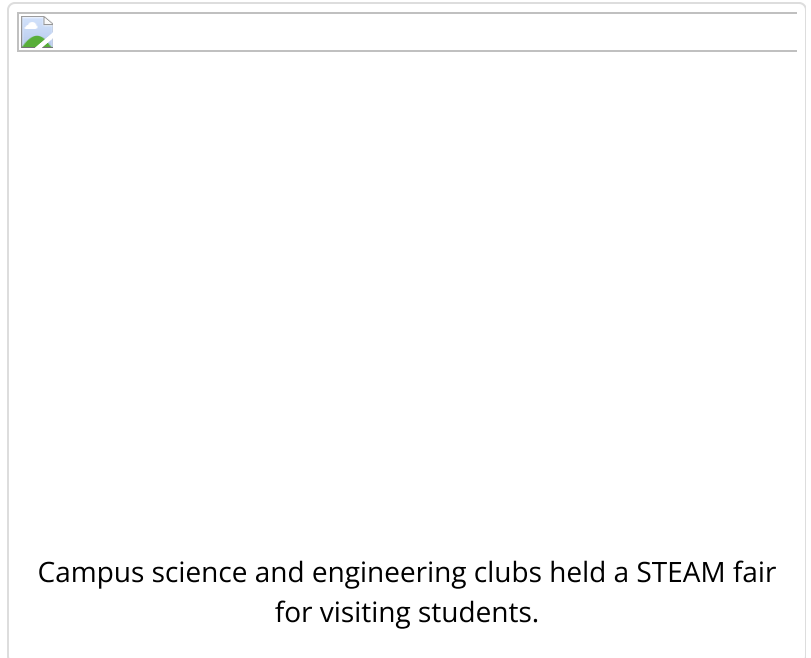
"I know nothing about space," she said. "I sort of panicked. I thought I needed to reach out to experts."

She contacted Sally Ride Science, and the result is a partnership that kicked off Oct. 27 with Kelly's robotics teams attending a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) fair and taking a tour of engineering labs at UC San Diego. "What an amazing event for our students!" Buchanan said.

The event was hosted by [Tritons for Sally Ride Science](https://www.facebook.com/tritonsforSRS/)

(https://www.facebook.com/tritonsforSRS/), a club made up of UC San Diego undergrads.

Tritons members set up a series of fun activities for about 45 fourth- and fifth-grade students.



- Students toured labs at Jacobs School of Engineering (<http://jacobsschool.ucsd.edu/>) and observed 3D printing in the EnVision Maker Studio. (<http://jacobsschool.ucsd.edu/envision/>)
- Campus science and engineering clubs held a STEAM fair where the visiting students had hands-on fun with robotics, 3D printing, rocket design and more.
- Each robotics team presented a space-themed project to UC San Diego students, who asked questions and offered suggestions. The projects are part of a LEGO competition where each team must design a solution to a space-based problem. The problems they tackled ranged from mining on asteroids to growing produce on Mars and cleaning up space junk.

"It was amazing to see the kids' faces light up as we showed them a little glimpse of engineering and robotics at UC San Diego," said Surabhi Kalyan, a senior bioengineering: biosystems major who is co-president of Tritons for Sally Ride Science.

Megan Lancaster, program manager for [UC San Diego Extension Pre-College Programs](https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/pre-college) (<https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/pre-college>), said Sally Ride Science looks forward to expanding the Kelly partnership and partnering with other schools or community groups in the future. “Sally Ride Science is passionate about continuing the stewardship of Sally Ride in the support of STEAM education for all students,” Lancaster said.

A legacy lives on

Ride, America’s first woman in space, cofounded Sally Ride Science in 2001 to inspire students, especially girls, in science and engineering. Ride, who was a physics professor at UC San Diego after leaving NASA, died of cancer in 2012. In 2015, Sally Ride Science became part of UC San Diego under the direction of [UC San Diego Extension](https://extension.ucsd.edu/) (<https://extension.ucsd.edu/>).

Soon after Sally Ride Science joined UC San Diego, some undergraduate women in science and engineering majors were looking for a way to support the organization’s mission. They formed an official campus club called Tritons for Sally Ride Science.

Kelly Elementary is a public school in the Carlsbad Unified School District. When the robotics program started at Kelly three years ago, there were just two teams of fourth- and fifth-grade boys taking part in organized robotics competitions. The program has quickly grown to eight teams, including two all-girl teams.

Younger students at Kelly also get a chance to try out robotics. The school has added a special lab called the Think Tank dedicated to teaching Next Generation Science Standards, engineering and robotics.

The program was made possible by a donation from [John Sanders](http://www.johnsanderson.com/home.html) (<http://www.johnsanderson.com/home.html>), a retired engineer and founder of Sanders TechEd Foundation. Sanders and his wife met Buchanan through friends who had a grandson in the Kelly robotics program.

Kelly robotics teams got feedback on their space-themed projects from UC San Diego students.

“Ms. Buchanan is truly a one-of-a-kind motivator and teacher, and deserves to be supported in every way possible,” Sanders said. He first donated a 3D printer to the school and later contributed funds for Kelly’s science programs.

The Kelly robotics teams have names like LUNARtics, MalFUNctioneers (putting “fun” in malfunction), Space Rovers and Galaxy Goats. As part of the LEGO competition, students presented their space-themed projects for judging Nov. 4 at High Tech High School in San Diego. They will compete again at LEGOLAND in February.

Buchanan has made a special effort to get girls involved in robotics. “I’ve noticed that if girls don’t have an opportunity to sit down and tinker, they don’t naturally gravitate to it,” she said. “Once they have a chance to get their hands on it and tinker, it’s such a spark. They’re totally engaged.”

Buchanan emphasized that it’s crucial to get students excited about inquiry-based science while they’re still in elementary school. “If we’re waiting for middle school for that spark to happen, it’s too late,” she said. “We’re missing the boat on too many kids.”

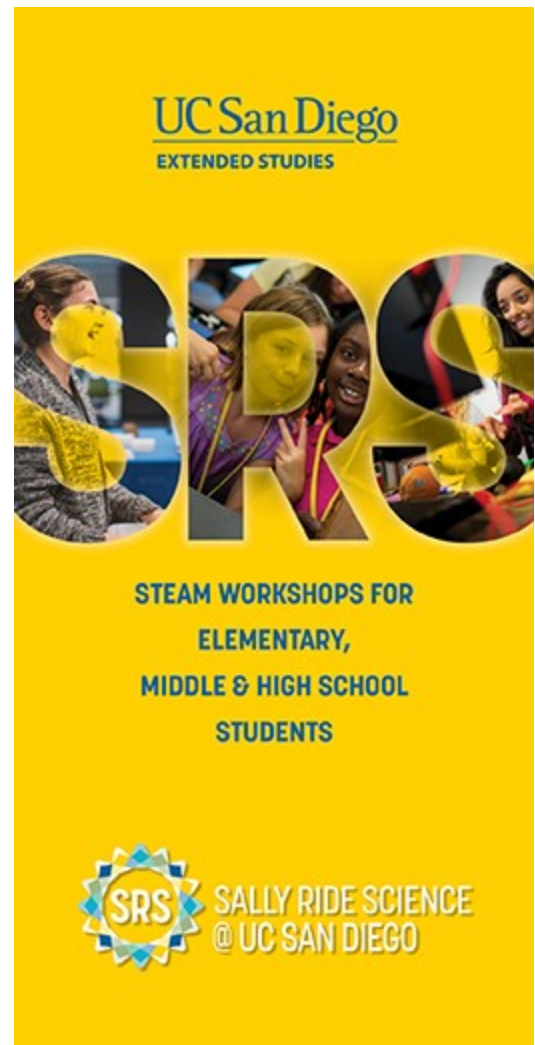
Kathryn Greenberg, a senior bioengineering major and co-president of Tritons for Sally Ride Science, said the undergraduate group is eager to build on the partnership. “While serving as mentors to these students, we look forward to helping them define new goals and providing them with opportunities to learn and grow,” she said.

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