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Space Grant Consortium: Parabolic flight inspires nextgen STEM classroom

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KENOSHA, Wis. – NASA Solar System Ambassador and science teacher Jennifer McCall will step aboard the Zero-G G-Force One aircraft for 30 parabolas and 10 minutes of weightlessness to inspire middle school students and teach them about science in space.

NASA Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium selected the 2018 NASA Space Academy alumna and former Project Lead the Way teacher at Kenosha Technology Enhanced Curriculum (K-TEC) School for the Embedded Teacher Program, an aerospace outreach program designed to equip K-12 teachers with first-hand knowledge of space flight research.

McCall will join the Carthage College Microgravity Team in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on Nov. 17 to conduct small demonstrations that answer questions posed by her students: Can you swim in space? Do liquids float when they are in your stomach in space? Do carbonated liquids behave the same as non-carbonated liquids in space? Carthage's undergraduate research team is testing technology during the flight that is under consideration for use in the Gateway Lunar Space Station.

"Take risks — dream about the possibilities" is a key message McCall, a long-time space enthusiast, wants students to consider. McCall, who transferred to a 100% Title 1 School in Lexington, Kentucky, earlier this year, will return to her middle school classroom with video of her experiments, insights into how research is conducted for space technology development, and the types of problems at the forefront of space research.

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The Embedded Teacher program provides Wisconsin K-12 teachers with the opportunity to develop inspiring curriculum for their classrooms through 25-second segments of weightlessness in flight. Student questions and interests in the space environment drive the development of small experiments for teachers to fly with researchers aboard G-Force One. Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium selected Kellie Arenz, Project Lead the Way teacher from Mukwonago, to participate in the Embedded Teacher Program in spring 2021. Arenz will be the sixth K-12 teacher to fly with the aerospace outreach program.