



Atascocita High School student and teacher named Bezos Scholars

The Bezos Scholars Program at the Aspen Institute selected Atascocita High School student **Natali Espitia** and teacher **Elyse Catoe** to be Bezos Scholars.

This leadership development program brings together 12 of the nation's top public high school juniors and 12 exceptional educators for an all-expenses-paid week of exploration, dialogue and debate at the Aspen Ideas Festival, June 25 – July 1. Espita and Catoe are the only

scholars named from Texas. And for the third consecutive year, the Bezos Scholars Program will include five outstanding students and an educator from the African Leadership Academy in South Africa.

In Aspen, Bezos Scholars will connect with visionaries from around the globe—international leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs and creative artists across diverse disciplines—and engage in lectures, presentations, debates and discussions around critical issues. Surrounded by the stunning Rocky Mountains of Colorado, past Scholars shared meals and intimate roundtable discussions with Twitter cofounders Biz Stone and Evan Williams, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Admiral Mike Mullen, musician Moby and New York Times columnist David Brooks, among many others.

“Bezos Scholars—both Students and Educators—are a powerful presence on the Aspen Institute campus,” says Kitty Boone, vice president of public programs at the Aspen Institute.

“Young people bring uncommon curiosity, passion for learning and fearless questions that enhance the dialogue.”

Following the Aspen Ideas Festival, this yearlong leadership development program continues as Scholars return home with the inspiration, relationships and tools to create Local Ideas Festivals on an issue of relevance in their own hometowns. Since 2005, Bezos Scholars have launched more than 100 Local Ideas Festivals across the U.S. and in South Africa to tackle a range of issues—from increasing healthier food options, to fighting poverty, to leading environmental clean-up projects, to increasing digital literacy, and more.

“The Aspen Ideas Festival is electrifying, and young people and educators are uniquely poised to act upon what they learn there,” says Jackie Bezos, president of the Bezos Family Foundation. “Bezos Scholar Teams return home to co-create Local Ideas Festivals that transform schools and communities across the U.S. and South Africa.”

