



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Paige Wolf, Director of Communications
Phone: (210) 227-5191 ext. 106 | E-mail: paige@fiestasanantonio.org

Miss Fiesta San Antonio 2020-2021 Continues Community Service Project for Fiesta 2021

SAN ANTONIO (August 17, 2020) – Miss Fiesta San Antonio 2020-2021, Calista Burns, continues to work on her community service project during her reign as Miss Fiesta San Antonio. Miss Fiesta San Antonio serves as a member of Official Fiesta Royalty and also acts as an ambassador who raises awareness for Fiesta San Antonio, the Fiesta San Antonio Foundation, and her community service platform she created during her reign. Calista's community service project focuses on educating young girls from underrepresented communities in San Antonio about the fields and careers in STEAM through the program called GEMS (Girls in Engineering, Mathematics, and Science). Calista is the Virtual Research Camp (VRC) Head Counselor and Research Coordinator, where she has led the GEMS VRC with the help of Stephanie Weiss-Lopez, GEMS Project Manager/Coordinator and UIW Meteorology Major, under the guidance of Dr. Michael Frye, GEMS Director and Professor of Engineering at UIW. In addition to her work with GEMS, Calista is a full-time undergraduate student at University of the Incarnate Word where she is majoring in Education and double-minoring in Mathematics and Reading.

Miss Fiesta San Antonio, Calista, says, "Due to the unfortunate events of the COVID-19 pandemic, GEMS was unable to host in-person summer camps. This led to the innovative summer program called GEMS Virtual Research Camp. The GEMS VRC is a four-week camp where five female high school students conducted research on the use

of Artificial Intelligence in pharmacy clinical decisions, robotic surgeries, special needs students competing in robotics competitions, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), and the effect of COVID-19 on adolescents.” Ms. Burns goes on to say, “They are just so impressive, and we are extremely proud of them. You could see and hear their passion about their research as they presented during the showcase.”

During the GEMS VRC, the students had the opportunity to meet with many influential women in STEAM: Christine James, Chemical Engineer and the Director of Optimization and Planning at Valero; Lorena Kaplen, H-E-B Registered Dietitian and the SA Sales Marketing Representative; Katie Chain, the Education and Workforce Program Manager at H-E-B; Dr. Stephanie Garcia, the Education Associate at the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA); and Hannah Zunker, the Lead Strategic Planning Specialist at Valero, and Founder and Chair of Florecer Femme.

Since GEMS was unable to host their summer camps this year, Calista partnered with Valero to create free GEMS STEAM Activity Kits for 50 girls who have been involved in GEMS camps or the miniGEMS FIRST LEGO League during this past year. The miniGEMS FIRST LEGO League is part of Calista’s community service platform as Miss Fiesta San Antonio. Calista personally delivered each STEAM activities kit, which included materials and instructions for three at home activities, and a special message and photo from herself as Miss Fiesta San Antonio 2020-2021 (photos below), to the homes of students attending Barkley-Ruiz Elementary of SAISD and Elolf Elementary of Judsson ISD.

Although Fiesta 2020 was cancelled, Calista continues with her Miss Fiesta San Antonio 2020-2021 community service project spreading the word about GEMS and keeping young girls engaged in the STEAM fields with the GEMS VRC and GEMS STEAM Activity Kits.

For more information on Miss Fiesta San Antonio, visit www.fiestasanantonio.org.

Thank you to our sponsors, Valero, Toyota, and Texas Western Wearhouse.



(continued below)

Miss Fiesta San Antonio 2020-21, Calista Burns, delivering GEMS STEAM Activity Kits to young girls in the GEMS Program.



###

About the Miss Fiesta San Antonio Program

The Fiesta San Antonio Foundation conducts charitable, educational and cultural programs related to and in furtherance of Fiesta® San Antonio. To become a charitable program, the Miss Fiesta selection process changed from a beauty pageant to an internship, during which Miss Fiesta executes a community service project.

For her community service project, Miss Fiesta selects one of the Fiesta® San Antonio Foundation's program areas of Arts and Culture, History and Heritage, Safety, Health and Wellness, or Education.

She develops and implements a project plan around that area, as well as attends Fiesta events as an ambassador, raising the public's awareness of the Fiesta® San Antonio Foundation and her project plan. Miss Fiesta San Antonio serves as one of nine official kings and queens who reign over the city's annual Fiesta celebration.

About the Fiesta San Antonio Commission

The Fiesta® San Antonio Commission Inc. is a nonprofit, volunteer, self-supporting organization that plans, promotes, coordinates, and preserves Fiesta® San Antonio through support of its Participating Member Organizations in presenting a safe, educational, annual celebration of the diverse heritage, culture and spirit of San Antonio for its residents and visitors.

Fiesta® San Antonio is a fusion of arts, heritage and culture to honor the memory of the heroes of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto. Taking place over 11 days, Fiesta literally has something for everyone with more than 110 events ranging in highlights from music, food, sports and pageantry to military and patriotic observances, exhibits, parades, Fiesta Royalty and more.

More than 100 local nonprofit organizations and military units create the more than 100 terrific events that take place over 11 days. Those nonprofit organizations spend the rest of the year giving back to the community of San Antonio.